

Volunteering and Employability: the roles and experiences of volunteer-
involving organisations and employers in Scotland

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Abstract

Volunteering is viewed as having a role to play in meeting policy objectives of Government at a local, Scottish, UK and EU level. One of those roles is in preparing people for paid employment. Some research has suggested that volunteering enhances employability, and this has become something of a universal truth.

However, the majority of research on volunteering and employability is based upon the experience of the individual who has been volunteering. The perspective of other players in the labour market has typically not been taken into consideration. This research aims to fill this gap in knowledge by considering the roles played in employability by the employer, and by labour market intermediaries, specifically volunteer-involving organisations.

Drawing on existing models of employability which demonstrate the importance of the labour market context, this qualitative research aims to better understand experiences of volunteering and employability that go beyond the individual volunteer. Taking a critical realist approach, the research is based upon in-depth interviews, and, in the case of employers, a pre-interview online survey. The data was analysed thematically to draw out themes within and across participating organisations.

The research has found that volunteer-involving organisations are providing a key specialist role in employability provision, offering coaching and support to volunteers. Funding available for employability has allowed these organisations to become more financially sustainable, but there are tensions relating to the impact on volunteering, and balancing the needs of organisations with the demands of Government programmes and the needs of volunteers.

From a labour market viewpoint, while third sector employers actively seek volunteering experience, public and private sector employers demonstrate an ambivalence towards volunteering; suggesting that while it can provide experience for those outwith the labour market, it does not form a part of the recruitment process, except where applicants are able to demonstrate its relevance.

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This thesis examines the roles and experiences of volunteer-involving organisations and employers in relation to volunteering and employability. Specifically it moves the debate on volunteering and employability beyond a focus on the individual volunteer and the supply side of employability, towards a wider view which takes into account the support available to volunteers from volunteer-involving organisations, as well as the employers' views of volunteering and the demand side of employability.

The focus of this thesis is on formal volunteering undertaken for employability: specifically volunteering undertaken through an organisation or group, with the primary purpose of improving individual employment outcomes. This excludes informal volunteering, and volunteering undertaken for other purposes.

The introduction begins by exploring the research context: in particular the context of the concepts of volunteering and employability. It goes on to position the thesis within existing debates on the relationship between volunteering and employability before going on to detail the research aims and objectives, with the final section introducing the structure of the thesis.

1.2 Why Volunteering?

Volunteering is a personal activity carried out by an individual within a particular context. Although volunteering is recognised as an individual activity, Governments and organisations such as the UN and International Labour Organisation take an interest in volunteering. This interest in volunteering ranges from mapping and developing definitions of volunteering (United Nations Volunteers, 2010), to measuring levels of volunteering (International Labour Organization, 2008), and to policies encouraging citizens to volunteer (Scottish Executive, 2004; Cabinet Office, 2011).

In the geographical context of this research, the Scottish Government and the United Kingdom Government promote volunteering to citizens as it is viewed as having a role to play in meeting Government policy objectives (Scottish Government, 2008b; Cabinet Office, 2011). One such area is that of unemployment, where volunteering is viewed as

a way to help unemployed citizens improve employability, and increase their labour market chances (Department for Work and Pensions, 2009a; 2013).

This view that volunteering is a useful instrument of policy, has been promoted by volunteering infrastructure bodies such as the National Council for Voluntary Organisations and Volunteer Scotland, which have published papers through their research functions that support the role of volunteering as an instrument of policy (Ockenden, 2007; Reilly, 2008; Volunteer Development Scotland, 2010d).

As such, volunteering is an area that warrants further study, particularly in light of the view that policy and research on volunteering has largely been uncritical of volunteering being viewed as an instrument of policy (Taylor, 2004; 2005).

1.3 Why Employability

Both the Scottish and United Kingdom Governments have promoted frameworks and provision to enhance the employability of the unemployed (Scottish Executive, 2006; Scottish Government, 2007; UK Commission for Employment and Skills, 2009; Scottish Government, 2012e). These frameworks take the position that the individual is responsible for improving their access to the labour market through participating in activities designed to improve their employability.

Research on employability has yielded frameworks for analysis such as that of Hillage and Pollard (1998) and McQuaid and Lindsay (2005). These frameworks support a wider view of employability beyond the individual ‘supply side’ view that puts the onus on the individual to improve skills, taking this into account alongside the ‘demand side’ in relation to the state of the labour market and recruitment behaviour of employers. In addition, the frameworks take account of the individual circumstances and characteristics of job seekers in relation to security of housing tenure, health, access to transport and household circumstances.

1.4 Why Volunteering and Employability

Volunteering has been described as being viewed as analogous to paid work and is therefore viewed as having a positive impact on individual employability (Lee, 2010a). However, studies on volunteering and employability have typically taken their focus on

the supply side, ignoring the demand and individual characteristics mentioned above. This means that the majority of research focuses on the individual experience as a volunteer, whether they ‘feel’ more employable, ignoring the wider context of the search for work (Cordon and Sainsbury, 2005; Tomlinson, 2009). The mixed methods research of Hirst (2000) brought this into sharp focus as it found that the positive impacts reported by individuals were not supported by quantitative data on the rate of individuals moving off benefits and into work.

Similarly, data on volunteering captured in large-scale surveys such as the Scottish Household Survey (Scottish Government, 2013c) and British Household Panel Survey (Ellis Paine et al., 2013) has provided some insight into volunteering and employability. However, this type of data has limitations with regard to placing the data in context. For example, the British Household Panel Survey can measure levels of volunteering and work of individuals over time, but cannot provide insight into the context of that volunteering and work, such as whether the individual undertook the volunteering for employability purposes.

Nevertheless, the story from the volunteering research community and volunteer-involvers has been positive, and volunteering continues to be promoted as a route to employability (Ockenden, 2007; Ockenden and Hill, 2009). More recently, two papers from the Third Sector Research Centre have raised questions about this unfailingly positive view of volunteering as a route to enhanced employability (Ellis Paine et al., 2013; Kamerade, 2013). Research based on secondary analysis of the British Household Panel Survey (Ellis Paine et al., 2013) suggests that there are weak relationships between the two concepts, and that where causal effects are found, they are highly dependent upon both the frequency of the volunteering, and the demographics of the individual volunteer. Similarly, a discussion paper (Kamerade, 2013) reaches the conclusion that while volunteering can help individuals gain skills, the skills are either not those sought in the labour market, or not transferable to the labour market. Both papers conclude therefore, that the impact of volunteering is confined to improved attitudes towards work, increased contacts and a better CV. The paper by Ellis Paine (2013) and colleagues specifically acknowledges the lack of effect on the demand side of the labour market.

This narrow supply-side focus means that there is a body of evidence of the impact of volunteering on the individual, but little known about the wider labour market context

within which this volunteering for employability takes place. This thesis aims to fill this gap in knowledge, by considering the demand for volunteering in the recruitment process, as well as the role of volunteer-involving organisations as labour market intermediaries.

1.5 Positioning the Thesis

As has been mentioned, volunteering is viewed as a route to enhanced employability, by Governments, volunteering infrastructure bodies and researchers (Ockenden, 2007; Department for Work and Pensions, 2009a; 2013; Volunteer Development Scotland, unpublished-a). However, the lack of research evidence on the specific role that volunteering has in helping individuals access the labour market leaves a critical gap in knowledge. This thesis aims to fill this gap in knowledge by focusing on the role of volunteer-involving organisations in preparing individuals for the labour market, and by focusing on the role that volunteering plays in the recruitment process through the view of employers. By extending understanding beyond the narrow supply-side view of the individual, this research can help improve practice in the provision of support for volunteers, as well as improve understanding of the role of volunteering as labour market preparation.

The thesis takes the view that volunteering can enhance individual employability, in the context that employability is defined as a process of movement towards the labour market. What is clear, is that that volunteering does not provide a direct route into employment.

At this stage it is useful to point out that volunteer-involving organisations are organisations who directly involve volunteers in their work. These come in many shapes and sizes, from the NHS to small local charities. Some volunteer-involving organisations have paid staff while others do not. Many use volunteer brokerage organisations such as Volunteer Centres to find volunteers. Both of these terms are used throughout the thesis.

1.6 The Research Aim and Research Questions

The main aim of the research is to understand the roles and views of volunteer-involving organisations and employers in Scotland in relation to volunteering and employability.

The main research questions:

1. What is the role of volunteer-involving organisations as labour market intermediaries?
2. What are the characteristics of volunteering and employability programmes delivered by volunteer-involving organisations?
3. What are employers' views on volunteering in the labour market?

The research questions and sub-questions:

1. What is the role of volunteer-involving organisations as labour market intermediaries?
 - a. What motivates volunteer-involvers to become involved in employability programmes?
 - b. How do volunteer-involvers see their role in the labour market?
 - c. How do volunteer-involvers relate to the labour market?
2. What are the characteristics of volunteering and employability programmes delivered by volunteer-involving organisations?
 - a. How is employability defined and measured in employability programmes?
 - b. What does the journey to the labour market look like?
 - c. Is all volunteering equal in an employability context?
 - d. Are volunteer-involving organisations recruiting volunteers into jobs?
 - e. What is the impact of this agenda for volunteering?
3. What are employers' views on volunteering in the labour market?
 - a. Do employers value volunteering experience?
 - b. Does volunteering experience convey skills in the labour market?
 - c. Does accreditation enhance volunteering?
 - d. Do volunteer-involving employers behave differently?
 - e. Do employers with personal experience of volunteering behave differently?
 - f. How does Employer Supported Volunteering relate to this?

1.7 The Thesis Structure

The structure of the thesis is as follows:

Chapter two introduces the conceptual framework for the research, including defining both volunteering and employability as concepts for use within the thesis.

Chapter three provides a literature review, covering volunteering, employment and employability. The chapter also identifies gaps in knowledge and explains how this research aims to fill those gaps.

Chapter four introduces the methodology used for the research, justifying the choice of a qualitative study and positioning the research within the critical realist philosophy. This chapter also introduces the research participants and provides important contextual information on these.

Chapter five provides a write up of the six case studies of volunteer-involving organisations who are involved in delivering ‘volunteering and employability’ programmes. The chapter takes each case in turn, using primary qualitative data to highlight themes.

Chapter six introduces the data collected from employers from both the pre-interview survey and the in-depth interviews. The chapter considers employers views of volunteering, its role in the recruitment process, the applicability of volunteering to the labour market, and wider labour market issues.

Chapter seven is a discussion and analysis chapter which draws across the findings from both the case studies and employers, and the literature. The chapter is structured around the research questions and sub-questions, answering each in turn.

Chapter eight draws conclusions from the research, using the structure of the three research questions. Further to this, it considers lessons learned from carrying out the research, and identifies potential future research arising from this thesis.

Chapter 2 – Conceptual Framework

2.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the concepts to be considered in this research, namely volunteering, employability and volunteering and employability. Definitions of these are introduced, and their use in public policy and their conceptualisation in research are discussed. A series of models are presented to offer lenses through which volunteering, employability, and volunteering and employability can be considered in the research.

2.2 Volunteering

2.2.1 *Defining volunteering*

There is no single definition of volunteering in existence which is agreed upon and viewed as suitable for use across the varying cultural and societal contexts within which volunteering takes place. In order to counter the difficulties of forming a single definition, most commentators have chosen instead to establish defining principles or common elements of volunteering (United Nations Volunteers, 2001; International Labour Organization, 2008; Ellis Paine et al., 2010).

These elements or principles typically take their focus on the activity being unpaid, free will and of benefit to others (United Nations Volunteers, 2001; International Labour Organization, 2008; Ellis Paine et al., 2010). Although the principles provide a useful checklist for applying the label of volunteering to an activity, Ellis Paine et al (2010) recognise that rather than being absolutes, there are spectrums of payment, free will and benefit along which any type of activity might be placed. For example, on a spectrum which ranges from free will to coercion, peer pressure to volunteer is placed differently to the threat from Government to sanction withdrawal of benefits as a result of non-participation. These authors use the three spectrums to create a conceptual map providing “a useful framework for testing the boundaries of volunteering” (Ellis Paine et al., 2010, p.17) which can be seen in the figure below:

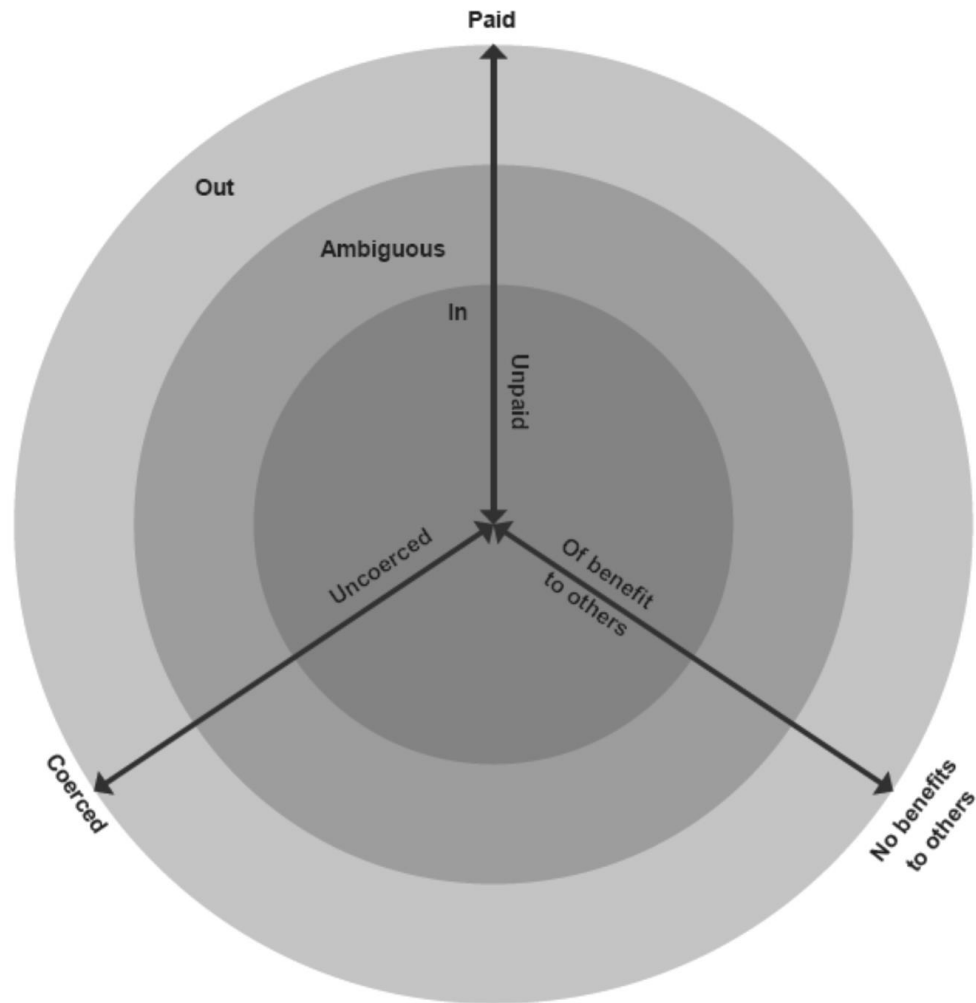


Figure 1: The multi-dimensional conceptual map of volunteering

The authors suggest that types of voluntary activity can be located on the three spectrums, providing a framework to help decide whether an activity is volunteering. However, this in itself is not simple. Take for example an unpaid intern seeking experience for a future career: it is simple enough to label them as unpaid, but the level of coercion, particularly in a difficult labour market (where they may believe they have to work for free in order to gain the experience needed for the paid labour market), and the benefit to others is debatable (particularly the benefit beyond the company for whom they are working). They may not have been directly coerced, but the benefit of undertaking the activity is immediate for the organisation where they are based, yet delayed, and potentially non-existent for them. As per the definition, they are not a volunteer. In this example, the activity is excluded because of the lack of societal or ‘other’ benefit from the activity, which is generally specified within definitions of volunteering (e.g. Scottish Executive, 2004).

In order to aid understanding of what volunteering might look like, Ellis Paine and colleagues (2010) suggest that in addition to the core principles of volunteering, there are a number of additional dimensions which have been used to categorise and classify volunteering. These include the level of organisation of the activity, the perspectives, the nature of the activity, and the intensity of involvement. These additional dimensions supplement the core principles and allow for additional levels of depth when describing volunteering activities.

Considering the dimensions of volunteering, the authors (Ellis Paine et al., 2010) go on to suggest that volunteering takes place with varying levels of organisation, from highly formalised volunteering programmes through to individual support provided to a neighbour. This would traditionally be described as ‘formal’ and ‘informal’ volunteering, where formal suggested the activity was carried out for or through an organisation, and informal suggested one-to-one unmediated assistance (Reilly, 2006). Drawing on research on informal volunteering through the life course in Scotland, Woolvin (2013) has mapped community activities onto a spectrum of activity, giving a non-hierarchical approach to the varying levels of formality of volunteering, taking into account formal, community and informal activities, and attempting to counter the ‘downgrading’ of informal volunteering.

The UN definition of volunteering specifies different types of volunteering, including: mutual aid or self-help, philanthropy, service to others, participation or civic engagement, advocacy or campaigning (United Nations Volunteers, 2001). In their review of volunteering definitions, Ellis Paine et al (2010, p.22) suggest that “expressive behaviours” are added to this list so that it includes activities relating to personal interest, e.g. sports volunteering. The ‘types’ of volunteering allow for a clearer delineation to be made between volunteering and other types of unpaid activity, such as the internships mentioned above.

The final dimension considered by Ellis Paine et al (2010) is that of the intensity of involvement where the amount of time given to the activity or organisation, the frequency of involvement and the time period over which this takes place are considered. This allows volunteers to be labelled as “episodic”, “long-term” or “one-off” which could be used to describe involvement in an annual fundraising activity, ongoing involvement in a club or involvement in the Olympic Games, respectively.

2.2.2 *Conceptualising volunteering in research*

When considering how volunteering was researched and measured across countries, Lyons, Wijkstrom and Clary (1998) suggested that there were two paradigms of volunteering. The first is the traditional non-profit paradigm, which originated in the US and is grounded in the disciplines of economics and law. Its focus is on volunteering carried out for a non-profit organisation (collectively termed the Third Sector or Voluntary Sector within the UK). The second is the civil society paradigm which originated in Europe and takes its roots from political science and sociology. This paradigm views volunteering more broadly: as participation in solving societal problems and a means of generating social capital. This second paradigm has largely been sidelined by volunteering research which either focuses on organisation based giving (see for example: Baird, 2005; Doyle, 2013; Harper and Doyle, 2013), or finds that participants align to the first paradigm rather than the second (see for example Lee, 2010a).

In his review of literature on volunteering in the UK, Rochester (2006, p.4) drew upon the two paradigm approach and incorporated Stebbins' serious leisure thesis (Stebbins and Graham, 2004) to develop what he calls a three perspectives model of volunteering, shown in the figure below:



Figure 2: The three-perspective model of volunteering

Like Lyons et al, he argues that the majority of research undertaken into volunteering focuses on unpaid work or service volunteering which is more entrenched in altruism than either activism or serious leisure. For example, PhD research into the relationship between volunteering and employability for Incapacity Benefit recipients found that participants were exclusively involved in volunteering relating to the first paradigm (Lee, 2010a).

Ellis Paine et al (2010) suggest that there are a number of research lenses through which volunteering can be viewed, including: work, philanthropy, activism, leisure, care, participation or learning. These authors are critical of the approach “where volunteering is demoted to a mere stepping stone to employment” (Ellis Paine et al., 2010, p.26), a viewpoint which has dominated research under the umbrella term ‘volunteering and employability’ (examples include Gay, 1998; Hirst, 2000; Cordon and Sainsbury, 2005; Ockenden and Hill, 2009; Lee, 2010a).

Volunteering has been linked to various types of capital, most commonly social capital, but also human, cultural, physical and economic (Davis Smith et al., 2004). Wilson and Musick (1997) suggest that while volunteering can help individuals gain social and human capital, they need social and human capital to become volunteers in the first place.

Bourdieu’s (1986) social capital theory looks at social capital through two lenses that are relevant to volunteering: social capital as a resource, and social capital as mutual cognition and recognition. He argues that voluntary association is a way of generating individual and collective social capital: “the formation of a voluntary association can be seen as collective and individual strategies of investment aimed at the creation of permanent networks of relations that will make possible the accumulation of social capital” (Bourdieu, 1986, p.251)

It is argued that human capital is improved through education, training and study programmes (Schultz, 1971) and that this improvement leads to enhanced future earnings. According to Becker (1975, p.9) investments in human capital “improve skills, knowledge or health, and thereby raise money or psychic incomes”. If volunteering is a source of human capital, it could be argued that it improves skills and knowledge and therefore access to better employment for the individual, as well as having a wider societal impact on the labour market.

An important element in considering the potential gains from volunteering, is in taking into account the organisational context of that volunteering. Omoto and Snyder (2002) argue that volunteering is primarily an activity of helping others in need; it is specifically sought out and sustained, and typically it is helping out people that the volunteer doesn’t know. As a result, volunteering provides a connection to a number of communities, both physical and psychological. For example, the community organisations in which

volunteering takes place have local roots, and as a result, volunteer activity often supports the community, or at the very least, has the community as a backdrop to activity. The importance of the spatial context(s) of volunteering have been raised by a number of authors (Milligan and Fyfe, 2005; Hardill et al., 2007; Woolvin et al., 2014). Omoto and Snyder (2002), conclude that the community setting of volunteering provides volunteers with networks of support, self-esteem, upward social comparison, civic participation and reciprocity.

Related to the importance of a community setting for volunteering, is the importance of the role of volunteers within voluntary organisations. A study of the Glasgow community and voluntary sector (Milligan and Fyfe, 2004) found that a key strength of involving voluntary sector organisations in welfare delivery was the democratisation and the connection to the community. However, the contractual basis of delivering these services on behalf of the state put constraints on how organisations could operate, and in some cases led to professionalisation that ultimately disenfranchised the volunteers. For some organisations there was a struggle between growth and professionalism and remaining a community focused grassroots organisation, meaning that as organisations grew larger, they relied more on paid staff, and trained volunteers, leaving little space for unskilled volunteers to participate (Milligan and Fyfe, 2005). The capacity of organisations to involve volunteers meaningfully, an issue raised previously in relation to rural settings in Scotland (Woolvin and Hardill, 2013), is an important consideration for this research.

Some research (Brewis, 2004; Rochester, 2006; National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement, 2009; Ellis Paine et al., 2010; Stevens, 2011) suggests that the term ‘volunteering’ is being used to encompass activities that involve some kind of coercion. Brewis and Rochester both suggest as an example employer supported volunteering (ESV) which challenges the traditional definitions in that it is not always freely chosen by participants or done in one’s own time as ESV schemes often provide paid work time in which to volunteer or decide the activities centrally. In addition, student volunteering activities that are assessed as part of coursework tend to be compulsory to take part in, although the activity itself and the recipient might be freely chosen (National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement, 2009).

Related to this, misunderstanding of the term volunteering has raised issues in both researching the activity (as people do not always recognise themselves as volunteers)

(Cnaan et al., 1996; Lyons et al., 1998; Baird, 2003b; Danson, 2003; Reilly, 2010) and in encouraging participation (as people have negative preconceptions of what being a volunteer means) (Baird, 2005; Rochester, 2006). Some but not all research defines what is meant by volunteering for the purpose of the study, e.g. Stopforth (2001) includes “compulsory” volunteering which forms part of training courses which are undertaken for employability in her study of refugees. Although the definition used in a particular piece of research might not strictly match those in public policy, the clarity of focus is helpful. As the Institute for Volunteering Research (Ellis Paine et al., 2010, p.4) note in their review of the term volunteering, “it is surprising how few [reports and articles on volunteering] explicitly address the very basic question of what exactly we are including in our field of study”. This argument echoes previous conceptual discussions of volunteering, which raised issues regarding the term being used for a very wide range of different activities without further categorisation (Cnaan et al., 1996; Handy et al., 2000).

In some research and policy discussions, the issue of volunteering for relatives arises as an area of contention. It is traditionally excluded in national surveys of volunteering (Scottish Government, 2010) and in government policy (Scottish Executive, 2004), yet open to debate within sociology (Edgell, 2006). In research into volunteering within black and minority ethnic communities (Reilly, 2004), it was found that the term ‘help’ was used rather than the term ‘volunteering’ and that help encompassed activities undertaken within the family which was part of culture and family values. These types of activities were primarily undertaken by women, and viewed as a normal part of life rather than additional activity undertaken to help others. Research into the gender inequalities of care (Himmelweit and Land, 2008) suggests that care is provided through family obligation, but that this is not free because of the opportunity cost to the carer. This opportunity cost applies to employment, education and leisure, and it is suggested that employers “consider women to be unreliable employees because their employment history is more likely to have been interrupted by caring responsibilities” (Himmelweit and Land, 2008, p.8).

2.2.3 *Use in public policy*

The Scottish Government has its own definition of volunteering which was developed for the Volunteering Strategy 2004-9. Although the strategy itself is no longer an active policy document, the volunteering definition remains unchanged:

“Volunteering is the giving of time and energy through a third party, which can bring measurable benefits to the volunteer, individual beneficiaries, groups and organisations, communities, the environment and society at large. It is a choice undertaken of one’s own free will, and is not motivated primarily for financial gain or for a wage or salary” (Scottish Executive, 2004, p.7)

This definition is clear that it relates to formal volunteering, e.g. volunteering through an organisation, by referencing ‘a third party’. It notes that a range of benefits arise from volunteering; in some cases the volunteer benefits as does the recipient of the activity, and the wider community. It also specifies the choice to participate and the motivation being not primarily financial. The caveat is that volunteers can legitimately be paid out of pocket expenses that arise from their activities such as travel and subsistence.

Where volunteering is considered differently within public policy is in the sphere of Welfare to Work programmes. Some UK government policies have included volunteering as a potential activity for the long-term unemployed either as a route to, or alternative to, paid work (Department for Work and Pensions, 2009c; 2012b). In the 1990s, Gay argued that “Proper recognition of volunteering as a Third Way alongside training agency courses and job club type options could lead to an increase in the number of trained people available to the service, care and environmental sectors and a fall in the number on unemployment benefits” (Gay, 1998, p.67).

In some cases, such as the DWP Volunteering Options programme, people had to choose an activity to undertake after six months of unemployment, one of which could be volunteering (Department for Work and Pensions, 2009a). This has the potential to muddy the waters between volunteering and enforced activity and has been raised as an issue by the European Volunteer Centre: “while acknowledging the positive effect of volunteering, it needs to be stated that it must remain a free choice, should not replace social measures to help the unemployed; and must not be an obligation to receive unemployment benefits” (CEV, 2007, p.7). Research into the role of Volunteer Centres in relation to employability also found that Job Centre Plus had been ‘instructing’ individuals to volunteer, thereby jeopardising the element of choice (Ockenden and Hill, 2009).

2.2.4 *Definition in use for this thesis*

The research interest for this thesis is the relationship between volunteering (unpaid work) and employability (the ability to access paid work). As a result, the focus is on formal volunteering, that is, volunteering through an organisation or group which is undertaken primarily to improve employment prospects. It does not include helping family, friends or neighbours.

In order to position the research within existing debates on volunteering, the two paradigm model and the three types of volunteering described by Rochester (2006) will be used to frame the research questions and the fieldwork. This means that the research will take account of volunteering through organisations that can be described as primarily altruistic, volunteering in relationship to community participation and social capital, described as activism, and serious leisure such as sport, arts and culture.

The personal and wider societal gains from volunteering will also be considered throughout. Social capital theory (Bourdieu, 1986) and human capital theory (Becker, 1975) form the theoretical basis for the study, and will be discussed further in relation to employability in the following section. Skills developed through volunteering range from specific role-related skills to more generic ‘soft’ skills such as communication and teamwork. The wider societal benefits of volunteering might range from improved health, to reduced dependence on statutory support.

2.3 Employability

2.3.1 *Defining employability*

Employability is a contested concept in relation to both theory and policy, and its focus varies from a narrow supply-side focus on the individual, to a broader demand-side focus on the individual within a wider labour market context (McQuaid et al., 2005). The demand side also takes account of the concept of employability in relation to movement within the labour market, as well as moving into the labour market.

In their review of employability literature, Hillage and Pollard (1998) suggest that there are two origins of employability; the first, as a replacement for job security in the light of shifting responsibility from the employer to the employee, and the second, as a shift in public policy towards an emphasis on skills-based solutions. Lindsay (2009) agrees that

employability as a concept has shifted over time being shaped by both government policy and prevailing labour market conditions.

In his thesis on the concept of employability, Lindsay (2009, p.61) maps out the history of the concept over the past 100 years, which he argues encompassed ‘seven versions across three waves’. The first wave focussed on ‘dichotomic employability’ and was a simplistic means of distinguishing the employable from the unemployable. The second wave emerged around the 1960s, and focused on the distance between individual characteristics and the labour market. At the same time, French policy literature took its focus on the demand side of employability and its relationship with the economy. The final wave originated in the 1980s and focused on individual responsibility, labour market performance, and the interaction between the individual and the labour market. He concludes that consensus has emerged around ‘interactive’ employability which appreciates the need to overcome barriers to work, and the role that the individual, social partners and the labour market have in this.

The three papers mentioned (Hillage and Pollard, 1998; McQuaid et al., 2005; Lindsay, 2009) suggest that employability has a number of elements, which include the individuals’ skills and experiences, how these relate to the labour market, how these are presented to employers and individuals’ own personal circumstances. This suggests the importance of the individual, the labour market and the employer in employability. The individual has the option to enhance their employability, but an enhancement would have to align with the available opportunities in the labour market, and the employers’ recruitment policies. As such, employability is not in the control of any one of the three, but by a complex combination of factors. An individual choosing to volunteer to enhance their employability, for example, would have to take account of the wider labour market conditions, and their ability to present the skills gained would be important. The figure below draws on the work of Hillage and Pollard, and was used in a piece of research carried out for the Northern Ireland Government. It draws on the arguments above to demonstrate the supply and demand and contextual factors influencing employability (Deloitte and Touche, 2001, p.73):

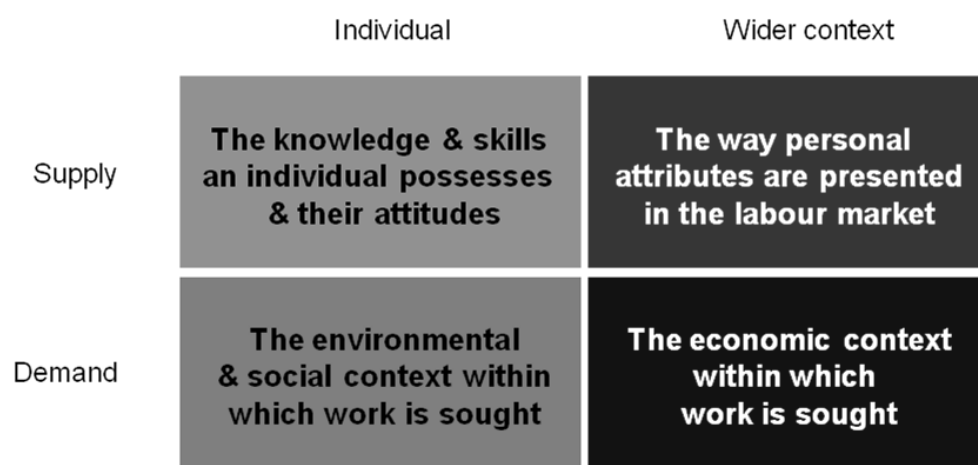


Figure 3: The dimensions of employability

Ideally the role of the individual in the labour market is to have skills and knowledge to offer that are relevant to recruiting employers, but also to be able to translate these between contexts within a strategic approach to finding work. Changes to the labour market context will alter the value of individuals' skills and experiences based on labour market needs. The labour market is in turn shaped by individuals, employers and government. In addition to their role as policy maker, government has a role through Job Centre Plus in assisting with matching individuals to potential vacancies and in supporting individuals in recognising and developing their skills. Their success in providing these functions has an impact on both the individuals they deal with, and on the wider labour market.

Hillage and Pollard (1998, p.19) also note the important role that employers play in employability: in relation to the creation of job vacancies, and in 'recruitment and selection behaviour', which individuals have to respond to. In their conclusions, they draw attention to the need to better understand the needs of employers and how this might vary by sector and size, their attitudes towards different people in the labour market, and whether they focus on existing needs, or potential future needs when recruiting. A body of work has responded to this gap in knowledge (Rubery and Wilkinson, 1994; Adams et al., 2000; Canny, 2004; Devins and Hogarth, 2005; Gore, 2005; Houston, 2005; Newton et al., 2005) and this will be discussed further in the following chapter.

Employability is not the same for all individuals in the labour market, and so Hillage and Pollard (1998, p.23) identify several 'employability groups' for consideration. It is expected that these groups will have varying needs in relation to employability and access

to the labour market. Those currently outwith the labour market are divided into three groups: labour market entrants, the unemployed, and the latent labour force. Those inside the labour market are divided into two groups: those at threat of unemployment and those with aspirations for better employment.

There is a body of work that critiques ‘employability’ as a concept in use. Cremin (2010) for example suggests that the concept lacks definition which causes anxiety, that it is derived from what it is *believed* that employers seek, and that it is only ‘achievable fleetingly’ and therefore part of an ongoing process. He argues further that employers are in a position of control where the concept is in use, particularly in relation to the shifting nature of the labour market. Research on the emergent role of employability as a substitute for loyalty within large businesses (Baruch, 2001) suggests that it is ‘illogical and unrealistic’ for organisations to pursue as they invest in staff to benefit themselves, rather than to benefit future employers.

2.3.2 *Conceptualisation in research*

Research on employability in relation to volunteering tends to describe the concept of employability in narrow terms, related only to the skills and knowledge of the volunteer, and the ability to utilise these to gain and maintain paid employment, ignoring the contextual demand factors (e.g. Speakman et al., 2001; National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement, 2009; Ockenden and Hill, 2009).

Academic research on employability, and in particular relating to conceptualising employability, has traditionally focussed on the concept in relation to supply and demand. Authors who have reviewed the origins of employability suggest that the study of employability has varied throughout the twentieth century (Hillage and Pollard, 1998; Lindsay, 2009). There is a suggestion of supply side dominance in research and policy, where employability deals primarily with the skills of individuals, or lack thereof, and the need to develop these (Hillage and Pollard, 1998). This is often described as the ‘narrow’ view of employability and criticised by those who assert the broader view which incorporates the wider labour demand conditions (McQuaid et al., 2005; McQuaid and Lindsay, 2005; Lindsay, 2009).

McQuaid, Green and Danson (2005, p.191) argue that behind the ‘narrow’ (supply side) and ‘broad’ approaches to employability lies an implicit belief that employability exists either only in relation to the individual (e.g. skills and attributes), or the individual situated within a wider employment context (e.g. job search and labour demand conditions). The authors also stipulate the importance of employability as a means of describing the search for work for those in a position of unemployment, as well as for those seeking different work. Research in relation to volunteering and employability rarely considers the role of volunteering in employability for those seeking a change of work, instead focussing on volunteering as a helping hand ‘back into’ the labour market for those outside (Gay, 1998; Hirst, 2000; Cordon and Sainsbury, 2005; Schugurensky et al., 2005; Lee, 2010a). Whether this is a result of policy agendas around unemployment and the use of volunteering in meeting these will be considered in the course of this research.

In his thesis on the concept of employability, Lindsay (2009, p.18) suggests that employability includes ‘the capacity to gain employment, sustain employment and make progress’. He states that employability is about the interconnectivity between ‘individual factors, personal circumstances and external factors’. This draws on the earlier work of McQuaid and Lindsay (2005) which suggested a framework for analysing employability across these three strands. The framework has been summarised in the figure below:

INDIVIDUAL FACTORS	PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCES	EXTERNAL FACTORS
<p>Employability skills and attributes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essential attributes • Basic transferable skills • Key transferable skills • Personal competencies • High-level transferable skills • Qualifications • Work-knowledge base • Labour market attachment 	<p>Household circumstances</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct caring responsibilities • Other family and caring responsibilities • Other household circumstances 	<p>Demand factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labour market factors • Macro-economic factors • Vacancy characteristics • Recruitment factors
<p>Job search and adaptability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job search and presentation skills • Adaptability and mobility 	<p>Health and well-being</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health • Disability 	<p>Enabling Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment policy factors • Other enabling policy factors
	<p>Access to resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to transport • Access to financial capital • Access to social capital 	

Figure 4: The three strands of employability

The theoretical basis for this research is social capital theory (Bourdieu, 1986) and human capital theory (Becker, 1975). Figure four can be viewed through these theoretical lenses, as ‘individual factors’ relate to human capital, and ‘personal circumstances’ relate to social capital. ‘External factors’ incorporate employers’ attitudes and recruitment practices which are effectively the context within which individuals deploy their social and human capital. As this framework was not created specifically to take account of volunteering activity, it is worth noting that volunteering can arguably impact upon all three strands: in helping individuals develop both employability skills and job search skills (Gay, 1998), in improving individual social capital and well-being (Putnam, 2000), and in contributing to employment policy (Lee, 2010b).

2.3.3 *Use in public policy*

The Scottish Government “Workforce Plus Employability Framework for Scotland” which was launched in 2006 defined employability as “the combination of factors and processes which enable people to progress towards or get into employment, to stay in employment and to move on in the workplace” (Scottish Executive, 2006, p.1). The focus on the factors and processes puts responsibility on a wider range of people, including government and other agencies to assist. This suggests a role that is not simply about supporting people to become skilled, but also in working with employers to shape both the labour market needs for skills, and attitudes towards skills. The Framework was refreshed in 2012 as “the context for employability in Scotland has radically changed” specifically in relation to Welfare Reform, Public Service Reform, Educational Reform and the economic climate (Scottish Government, 2012e, p.4).

The UK Commission for Employment and Skills (2009) does not talk about employability, instead using the term ‘employability skills’ which it uses to describe the skills that everyone needs in order to do a job. This includes functional skills, such as using IT, and personal skills, such as communication. This puts responsibility for employability firmly with the individual. McQuaid and Lindsay (2005, p.205) suggest that the employability skills view “has come to define many policy makers’ identification of skills gaps and their understanding of the concept of employability”.

This narrows the analysis of the role of individuals’ skills within the wider labour market context which supports the suggestion that it is viewed primarily in policy as a supply

side concept (Hillage and Pollard, 1998; McQuaid and Lindsay, 2005; Lindsay, 2009). In their review of the concept in 1998, Hillage and Pollard (ibid) suggested that there was little agreement about where the responsibility lay for employability, or what makes someone employable. Lindsay (2009) argues that supply-side policies have no impact on the number of jobs in the economy, and therefore the number of people in work.

2.3.4 *Definition for use in this thesis*

For the purpose of this research, the broad definition of employability will be used, i.e. that employability relates to a combination of individual, employer and labour market factors. The research will focus on employability as it relates to those out with the paid labour market, seeking employment, as well as those who are in the paid labour market and seeking alternative employment.

2.4 Volunteering and Employability

2.4.1 *Conceptualisation in research*

Research carried out in the volunteering research community regarding volunteering and employability tends to use the non-profit paradigm of altruism-focused volunteering for a non-profit organisation as the starting point. The skills gained through volunteering, both specific and soft, are the main focus with arguments made that volunteering can either re-skill those who have been outside the labour market or up-skill those who are seeking new employment opportunities (Gay, 1998; Stopforth, 2001; Cordon and Sainsbury, 2005). In contrast however, Hardill and Baines (2007) argue that the agenda offers little to those outwith the labour market for reasons relating to age, disability or caring responsibilities.

The benchmark for whether volunteering has impacted on employability is usually whether the volunteers entered paid employment during the timescale of an employability project or its subsequent evaluation. Some research focuses on whether individuals ‘feel’ that volunteering had increased their employability through a series of questions about individuals’ feelings about their volunteering experience (e.g. Gay, 1998; Hirst, 2000; Cordon and Sainsbury, 2005). In one mixed methods study, the number self-reporting employability gains was not borne out by the number entering some form of paid employment (Hirst, 2000). In other research, volunteer involvers have been asked

whether they feel that volunteers have had employability gains, with positive responses from over half of Volunteer Centres in England who were involved in delivering volunteering and employability programmes (Ockenden and Hill, 2009).

Paid employment is the eventual aim of many programmes and individuals are typically tracked to see the outcome, which usually takes one of three main forms: 1) finding work in the same (or a sister) organisation (e.g. Tomlinson, 2009; Lee, 2010a), 2) finding work in a different organisation (e.g. Lee, 2010a) or 3) not finding work at all (e.g. Hirst, 2000; Lee, 2010a). In the first two instances, this may be a result of design, e.g. the volunteer chose that organisation to volunteer with in the hope of finding work there, or accident, e.g. the volunteer happened to be present and have relevant experience and interest when a post became available. In the third instance, it may be that the evaluation finished before some participants had made a successful transition to the labour market, or that, due to their personal circumstances, it was unlikely that they would move into work. In an example from Lee's (2010a) research, one participant had found the transition to paid work too difficult, and so had gone back to volunteering, deciding that a lot would have to change before he would be ready for the stress of paid employment. Volunteering, therefore, can act as a replacement activity for paid work, tying in with Beck's (2000) argument that civic work like volunteering should be equally valued to paid work as a contribution to society, as there is a reality that not everyone will be able to access employment.

Finding work in the same organisation as a result of volunteering is one element of the relationship between volunteering and employability but will not be possible in all cases. It also raises the issue that employers who are also volunteer-involvers may be using volunteering as a means of using free labour while scoping future potential employees (Lee, 2010a). Finding work in a different organisation which may or may not be in the same field or sector is potentially more convincing that volunteering provides preparation for paid work, e.g. the ability to translate skills from one area to another, and will be investigated in this research. For example, a volunteer might be able to use the team building and problem solving skills from environmental volunteering to gain paid work in the financial services.

Not finding work at all might suggest that volunteering has not impacted upon an individual's employability. However, that is dependent on whether paid employment is

viewed as the indicator of employability, or whether employability can be said to have been enhanced (rather than achieved), e.g. through increased confidence (Gay, 1998; Stopforth, 2001; Ockenden and Hill, 2009). Access to employment in the short term may be an unrealistic goal for those further from the labour market who may require support over a longer period of time before (re)entering paid employment (Lindsay, 2009, p.141). As such, it is possible for employability to be enhanced by interventions over a period of time until the individual is job-ready.

The figure below draws on previous research on volunteering and employability (Hirst, 2000; Stopforth, 2001; Cordon and Sainsbury, 2005; Cook and Jackson, 2006; Tomlinson, 2009; Lee, 2010a; Kamerade, 2013) and lays out the work outcomes identified in the literature in a tabular form:

Number	Outcome
1	Volunteer moves into paid work with the same organisation
2	Volunteering moves into paid work with an organisation they have dealt with while volunteering
3	Volunteer moves into paid work in an unrelated organisation
4	Volunteer remains unemployed but continues volunteering
5	Volunteer remains unemployed but continues to volunteer while they search for paid employment
6	Volunteer remains unemployed but stops volunteering to concentrate on search for paid employment

Figure 5: The potential outcomes of employability programmes

In their examination of the role of the third sector under New Labour, Haugh & Kitson (2007, p.988) argue that “many of those *employed* in the third sector are often disadvantaged or detached from orthodox labour markets” (emphasis added). This suggests that organisations in the third sector may be more flexible in terms of whom they choose to employ which in turn raises a question as to whether volunteering as a route to employability might work in relation to employment in the third sector, but might not in relation to the public or private sectors (Lee, 2010a). However, as little is known about the differing needs and attitudes to those with a specific volunteering background of employers in the different sectors, including their requirements with regard to

employment experience, and skills, this is a gap in knowledge that this thesis aims to fill. In relation to the role of the third sector in employment, Haugh & Kitson (2007) go on to argue that the third sector and social economy help to increase employment at the local level.

Research undertaken relating to volunteering and employability does not seem to take account of the wider definitions of employability, often the focus is on only those coming into the labour market, not taking account of those seeking a career move or promotion within the labour market, an issue raised in the previous section on employability. In addition, the skills gained by the volunteer are the focus rather than employer recruitment requirements or the wider labour market.

2.4.2 *Definition in use for this thesis*

Therefore “volunteering and employability” is about more than whether a volunteering experience can lead to paid work. The relationship is complex, and made more so by the contested nature of both concepts. The research will take account of the relationship between formal, organisation-based volunteering for employability and access to the paid labour market. It will explore the relationship between volunteering and social capital in relation to finding work in a similar organisation, as well as the development of human capital that can pave the way to paid employment in a different field or sector. The role of volunteering in providing a wider societal benefit beyond individual employability gains will also be considered.

The relationship with employability will be investigated in relation to the skills of the individual, the views of employers in the labour market, and the wider labour market factors. This marks a departure from the supply-side focus on the individual and is an attempt to increase knowledge of the relationship between the internal and external factors related to employability. Employability therefore refers to those currently in or seeking paid employment with the aim of enhancing knowledge of the role(s) that volunteering can have for different people within the labour market.

2.5 Summary and Conclusions

This chapter has explored the key concepts in use in the research: volunteering, employability and volunteering and employability. By considering use of the terms in

research and policy, as well as introducing models of how they can be applied, it has specified the frame of reference for the research.

Issues relating to the difficulty of defining volunteering have been highlighted, in particular relating to the impact of this on measuring and understanding volunteer involvement. The multi-dimensional model of volunteering (figure one) has been introduced to demonstrate the various parameters on which volunteering can be measured, acknowledging that even within that structure there is ambiguity regarding particular types of activity.

Although it is acknowledged that there are different paradigms of volunteering, it is clear that policy and research are largely focused on the traditional non-profit model of volunteering. This is the case for volunteering as it relates to employability, as volunteering within the structure of an organisation is viewed as a way of providing work-like experience, and therefore is viewed by policymakers as providing a route to paid work.

The contested nature of employability as a supply-side, or demand-side concept highlights the shortfalls of research on volunteering which has taken its focus solely on the individual, ignoring the wider labour market contexts. The model details factors affecting employability (figure three) provides a structure to consider how volunteering might go beyond the individual in enhancing employability, influencing the wider contextual and demand factors. This argument is supported by the three strands framework (figure four) which supports the view of employability as a combination of individual factors, personal circumstances and external factors.

Therefore, the relationship between volunteering and employability is complex and dependent upon a number of factors. It is clear from research that although hard job outcomes have been the target of programmes, often the programmes have fallen short of this. This does not necessarily mean that intervention has not been worthwhile as there have been evidenced gains in self-confidence, soft skills and participation. A set of potential outcomes of volunteering and employability programmes has been identified from the literature (figure five).

The following chapter takes the form of a literature review, further exploring the contexts of volunteering, employment and employability, before highlighting gaps in knowledge, and identifying research questions which aim to fill those gaps.

Chapter 3 – Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

This chapter is a review of literature which is relevant to the research area. It focusses on:

- The volunteering context
- The employment context
- The employability context
- The relationship between volunteering and employability

The chapter concludes by highlighting the gaps in knowledge, and detailing the research questions that this thesis aims to answer.

3.2 The Volunteering Context

3.2.1 *Volunteering in Scotland*

Information on volunteering in Scotland is captured both quantitatively and qualitatively. The main quantitative data source on formal volunteering is the Scottish Household Survey: a large-scale, Scottish Government commissioned survey that captures “reliable and up-to-date information on the composition, characteristics, attitudes and behaviour of Scottish households and individuals, both nationally and at a sub-national level” (Scottish Government, 2012c, p.1) . This data allows for an understanding of the demographics of volunteers, the activities undertaken, the frequency of volunteering, and the attitudes of lapsed and non-volunteers.

Qualitative research on volunteering is typically small scale, and provides a rich story of who volunteers, their motivations, experiences and stories (see for example: Reilly, 2004; Baird, 2005; Reilly and Cassidy, 2008). Qualitative research on volunteering has been open to criticism for not being representative of the population, while quantitative research has been criticised for not providing enough depth of information (Danson, 2003). As such, the information that is known on volunteering is open to critique from quantitative and qualitative researchers alike, but nevertheless provides insight into the experience of volunteering in Scotland.

How volunteering is defined in research has implications for how it is researched, and to what degree those research findings are accepted. In his review of research and evidence

on volunteering carried out for the Scottish Executive Volunteering Strategy, Danson (2003) suggests that the level of volunteering in Scotland ranges from 20-80% depending on how the research question is asked. In addition, the sample size of studies dictates whether or not findings can be drawn down further by age or gender or location to provide meaningful information. Further to this, he suggests that there is a need to develop questions to separate out the factors viewed to have significant effects on volunteering (Danson, 2003).

Having reviewed the findings of a series of studies carried out into the levels of volunteering, Volunteer Development Scotland (2003) suggested that omitting the word 'volunteering' from survey questionnaires led to a higher level of activity being reported (38% rather than 20%). This finding led to survey questions being altered, and instead of being directly asked if they volunteer, participants were provided with a list of activities that were viewed as volunteering, and asked to identify those which they had undertaken in the past twelve months. This is the methodology subsequently used by the Scottish Household Survey, and the Citizenship Survey in England and Wales (from 2012, the Citizenship Survey was renamed the Community Life Survey) (Low et al., 2007; Scottish Government, 2012c).

According to the latest Scottish Household Survey Annual Report (Scottish Government, 2013c), around 29% of the Scottish population volunteered formally in 2012. As shown in figure six, the level of volunteering in Scotland has remained steady at around a third of the population over the last six years (Scottish Government, 2008c; 2009b; 2010; 2011b; 2012c; 2013c):

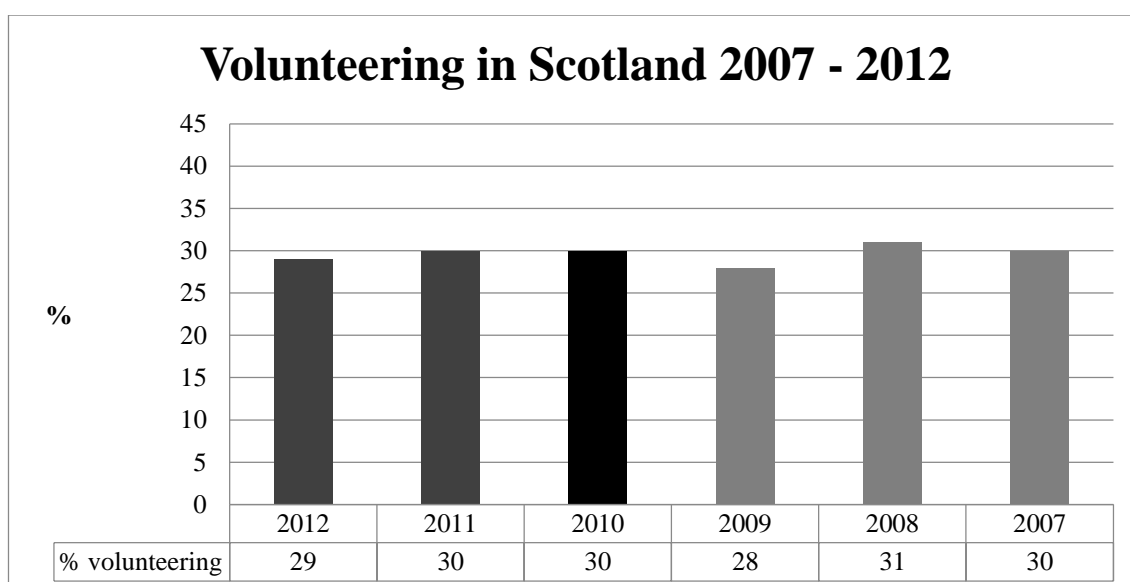


Figure 6: Volunteering in Scotland 2007-2012

Previous to this there were alterations to the sample size and question wording, therefore “robust comparisons cannot be drawn” (Hurley et al., 2008, p.127). The 2012 data is based on a representative sample of 9,890 individuals. Underneath that top line figure of participation, there are a series of trends on who volunteers, how much volunteering they do and whom they volunteer for.

Women are more likely to volunteer than men, and those aged 35-44 are more likely to volunteer than any other age group. Volunteering is more common among those who are in some form of employment (e.g. self-employed, full or part-time employment) and those in higher or further education. The unemployed and those who are permanently sick and disabled are much less likely to participate in volunteering (20% and 14% respectively). The level of volunteering drops to 19% for those living in the poorest Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation areas (Scottish Government, 2012d), compared to 31% of the Rest of Scotland (e.g. areas that are not deprived) (Scottish Government, 2012c). All of this suggests that disadvantaged groups are underrepresented in volunteering, and figure seven supports this argument, showing that those in education or employment are more likely to volunteer, based on data from the Scottish Household Survey (Scottish Government, 2013c):

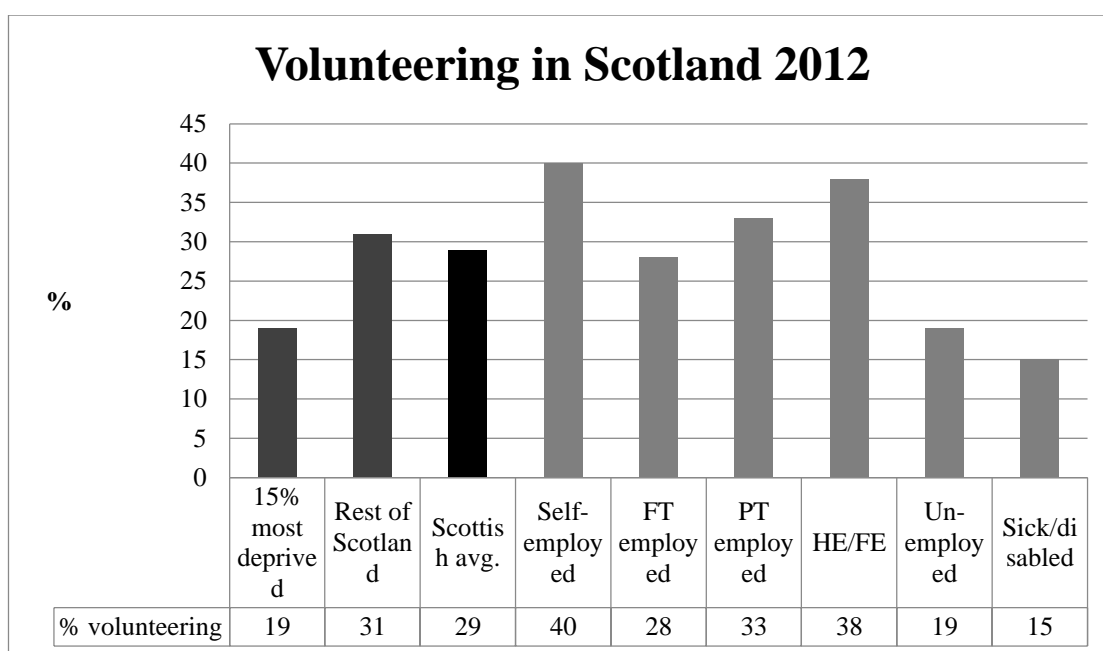


Figure 7: The demographics of volunteering in Scotland

According to a small-scale survey commissioned by Volunteer Development Scotland (2011), 7% of volunteers help out in the private sector (e.g. care homes, education), 15% in the public sector (e.g. NHS, education, local authorities) and 81% in the voluntary sector (e.g. social enterprises, large charitable organisations, local community groups). Volunteers are usually managed by a volunteer manager who is either a paid member of staff with responsibility for volunteers, or a fellow volunteer (Zimmeck, 2000). Research carried out in 2012 suggests that 55% of Scottish charities are run solely by volunteers and have no paid staff (Doyle, 2013).

Although the level of volunteering has remained steady over time, there are people stopping and starting volunteering, and the Scottish Household Survey captures some of the reasons why individuals stop volunteering, and the motivations that would encourage them to restart volunteering (Scottish Government, 2012c). Some of the reasons have bearing on the relationship between volunteering and employment, for example, 27% stop because they no longer have the time, 17% because their circumstances had changed, and 12% because they had changed job/started job or their job got busier. Interestingly, only 3% of lapsed volunteers cite 'if it would improve my career/jobs prospects' as a reason why they may return to volunteering (Scottish Government, 2012c, p.139).

3.2.2 *Volunteering in the UK, Europe and further afield*

Volunteering levels in England and Wales are captured through the Citizenship Survey (now the Community Life Survey) on a rolling basis similar to the Scottish Household Survey. In 1992, 1997 and 2007 National Surveys of Volunteering were undertaken to provide more in-depth information to supplement this. This survey is more detailed than the Scottish Household Survey and so direct comparison is not recommended. That said, the trends found in Scotland are echoed in England and Wales and additional information on motivation and activity are collected. In the context of volunteering and employability, it is interesting to note that only 19% of respondents stated that ‘to learn new skills’ was their reason for volunteering. Equally, improved job prospects scored lowly with regard to what people get from volunteering (23%). This could be significant for this thesis (Low et al., 2007).

According to a Eurobarometer poll in 2007, three in ten Europeans are involved in volunteering and eight in ten consider it to be an important part of life. This figure conceals differences between member states as some countries have participation levels as high as 60% (e.g. Austria), while others are as low as 10% (e.g. Bulgaria). These differences can be partly explained by reference to the difficulty in measuring volunteering without a clear universal definition (Lyons et al., 1998; Danson, 2003; Volunteer Development Scotland, 2003), or by historical meanings of volunteering within countries that may either give the word negative connotations, or make difficult to distinguish from helping out (International Labour Organization, 2008). That said, similar to the UK, educational attainment and being in work are indicators of participation in voluntary activity (European Commission, 2007).

The volunteering rate is similar in the US, staying between 25% and 30% over the last ten years (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2010). Rates of volunteering in Canada and Australia are a little higher at 45% and 34% respectively (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007; Hall et al., 2009). Direct comparison is difficult due to the varying methodologies and definitions used to measure volunteering activity (Lyons et al., 1998), but indications are that formal volunteering is at a steady rate of around one third of the population in most Western developed countries.

3.2.3 *Public policy on volunteering and its impact*

In Scotland in 2004, the then Scottish Executive commissioned Volunteer Development Scotland to develop a Volunteering Strategy for Scotland to set out “how the Scottish Executive will work with the voluntary, public and private sectors to provide opportunities so that anyone who wants to volunteer can do so readily; to ensure that volunteering is valued and recognised as a force for good and a force for change; and to ensure that volunteers are supported and encouraged in every possible way” (Scottish Executive, 2004, p.1). The Strategy was formed through a combination of research and consultation.

The Strategy notes that although volunteering is a private activity, government has a role in supporting it and ensuring that everyone who wants to take part can do. This fits with Rochester’s (2006, p.24) argument that government policy “treats as self-evident” the need to increase the number of individuals participating in volunteering and Taylor’s (2005) argument that volunteering is consistently viewed in a positive light.

Policy rhetoric on the positivity of volunteering often does not fit with a corresponding increase in support for volunteer-involving organisations in order for them to involve more volunteers. This echoes the supply-side policy focus in the paid labour market, where Government focus on moving more people into work without focussing on capacity building to ensure that employment opportunities exist for them within the labour market.

Volunteering is viewed by government as contributing across a range of public policy objectives including health, education and transport (Scottish Executive, 2004; Scottish Government, 2008b). The impact of volunteering on the volunteer can also contribute to policy objectives as the development of skills can potentially enhance access to employment opportunities. The Strategy outlined how the Scottish Executive aimed to support volunteering through facilitating and enabling the vision of volunteering for Scotland (Scottish Executive, 2004, p.31).

The Volunteering Strategy was dated 2004-2009 and has since not been replaced or updated by the Scottish Government. Since coming into power in 2007, the Scottish National Party have taken forward a number of strategies in different policy areas which have volunteering at their core, including the “Refreshed Strategy for Volunteering in the

NHS in Scotland” (Scottish Government, 2008b) and the Commonwealth Games “Games Legacy for Scotland” (Scottish Government, 2009a).

Volunteering holds multiple roles in relation to public policy, and Rochester (2006, p.2) notes that “the current weight of expectation about the contribution it can make to individual development, social cohesion and addressing social need has never been greater”. Taylor (2005, p.121) criticises research on volunteering that is grounded in public policy, arguing that governments interest in it is actually in how it relates to the state. This has led, she argues, to a “managerial literature that sees volunteers as a group who are interesting in as much as they need to be recruited, supported and retained”. This view is supported by Ellis Paine et al (2010, p.6) who suggest that “there is a considerable gap between the conceptual understanding of volunteering by some policy makers and the reality”. Meijis, Ten Hoorn and Brudney (2006) suggest that governments have been slow to develop a coherent approach to volunteering which links policy goals to instruments in the same way that they have for employability.

3.2.4 The role of the volunteering infrastructure in Scotland

Government support for volunteering in Scotland is provided through funding to local Third Sector Interfaces which are responsible locally for volunteer development, social enterprise development, supporting and developing a strong third sector, and building a third sector relationship with community planning (Pearson, 2010). This arrangement has been in place since April 2011, and formed part of a wider agenda of public service reform, and linked to Community Planning and Single Outcome Agreements locally. This policy shift has been appraised as providing stronger infrastructure support for volunteering than the other parts of the United Kingdom (Woolvin et al., 2014).

Previously, volunteering had been funded through the Scottish volunteering infrastructure which included the national centre for volunteering: Volunteer Scotland (previously Volunteer Development Scotland), and the network of 32 Volunteer Centres (one in each local authority area). This funding support allowed the volunteering infrastructure to provide support to volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations, to provide accreditation of volunteer programmes and provide intelligence on volunteering to policy makers and practitioners (Scottish Government, 2008a; Volunteer Development Scotland, 2010a).

Volunteer Scotland is responsible for managing the Volunteer Scotland website, which provides information on volunteering opportunities in Scotland (Volunteer Development Scotland, 2010c). The website is populated by the local Third Sector Interfaces who hold a record of volunteering opportunities available locally. The national website allows individuals who are interested in volunteering to search for opportunities by location and/or keyword, and then to narrow the search by cause, time available, organisation or services. For those who are unsure what to search for, there are links to new opportunities, popular opportunities, and recently updated opportunities. National opportunities such as the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games, and other event opportunities are also advertised, as are prospects for funding, e.g. for the 2012 London Olympic Games, there was finance available to Scottish volunteers to assist with travel expenses. Individuals can access the website and apply directly to organisations to volunteer, or they can contact their local Volunteer Centre through the website to discuss the opportunities presented or to ask for support. Organisations can also advertise opportunities through the website, subject to a series of minimum requirements, including the provision of a named contact, and having insurance in place (Volunteer Development Scotland, 2010c).

Within the Third Sector Interface umbrella, there is a specific unit, or organisation with responsibility for volunteering. Due to the previous funding settlement that allowed for a Volunteer Centre in each local authority area, some areas still have a stand-alone Volunteer Centre that works in partnership with the local Third Sector Interface to deliver volunteer development, while others have merged with other local organisations to form a physical Interface (Voluntary Action Scotland, 2013). The local role of the volunteering function is to provide advice and support to volunteers and volunteer involvers through matching services, training and one-to-one support. Volunteer Centres have historically been involved in Community Planning Partnerships locally, influencing policy and practice in areas such as Community Learning and Development and Social Economy Partnerships (Reilly, 2008; Volunteer Development Scotland, 2009). It is expected that this work will continue, as the Third Sector Interfaces are aligned with Community Planning Partnerships locally (Pearson, 2010). Specifically relevant to this research, some Volunteer Centres (in whatever form they take locally) are involved in employability programmes at the local level and work with Local Authorities and Job Centre Plus in preparing people for work (Volunteer Development Scotland, 2009). The Job Centre/Volunteer Centre partnership approach is based on evidence of ‘what works’ from a pilot project undertaken in South Lanarkshire (Baird, 2003a).

Volunteer Scotland was the Scottish partner in the Department for Work and Pensions 'Volunteering Options' programme which ran from March 2009 to November 2010 and signposted over 300 people who had been unemployed for six months or more to volunteering (Department for Work and Pensions, 2009a; Volunteer Development Scotland, 2010b). The programme involved Job Centre Plus local offices referring people who had been unemployed for over six months to volunteering with a view to preparing them for work (Vegeris, 2010). The programme was due to run until March 2011 but funding was stopped by the Coalition Government in late 2010 and the Work Programme was introduced in June 2011 (Department for Work and Pensions, 2012b). The Work Programme allows participants to volunteer in order to enhance their employability, and Volunteer Development Scotland and some of the Volunteer Centres are involved in facilitating this as subcontractors to the two prime contractors in Scotland, Ingeus and Working Links (Department for Work and Pensions, 2011b).

Volunteer Scotland is also responsible for Investing in Volunteers (IiV) and Investing in Volunteers for Employers (IiVe) which are quality standards for organisations who involve volunteers and employers who run employer supported volunteering programmes (Volunteering England, 2013). Both quality standards assess the commitment that organisations give to volunteering including providing resources and support and ensuring equality and appropriate recognition. The processes are similar to Investors in People (IiP) which is in the strategic ownership of the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (Investors in People, n.d.).

3.3 The Employment Context

3.3.1 *Paid and unpaid work*

In his review of the concept of work over time, Edgell (2006, p.24) sets out the dominant concept of work as follows: "a systematic articulation of this model suggests that once industrial capitalism has been established, the defining features of the dominant conception of work are that it is work that is undertaken outside the home (i.e. industrial), for pay (i.e. capitalist), by adult males on a full-time and uninterrupted basis (i.e. patriarchal), and is allocated individually with reference to impersonal, universalistic criteria (i.e. modern)".

Volunteering varies in several ways from this definition, and therefore it could be argued to be excluded from definitions of work: because it is unpaid, carried out on an irregular basis by both sexes and on some occasions, such as online volunteering or mentoring, carried out in the home. Edgell therefore suggests that volunteering is a threat to the dominant paradigm of work and, as a result of this, voluntary work has been side-lined by official statistics which he argues “reflects the continued pre-eminence of the dominant conception of work that undervalues unpaid work” (2006, p.155). This viewpoint aligns with the work of Taylor (2004) who critiqued the dominant view of work as being either public and paid, or private and unpaid. Drawing on research with individuals whose work sits outside the traditional paid domain, she developed a framework that allowed for acknowledgment of the setting of work, as well as whether it was paid or unpaid, offering a continuum rather than a dichotomy.

These arguments were also supported by Beck who makes the point that a society based upon full employment ‘relegates’ family and voluntary work, and suggests that in a ‘new Europe’ ‘citizen-work’ such as volunteering be valued equally to paid work (Beck, 2000). In a related point, Taylor argues that it is to the detriment of volunteering research that it has been separated from paid work and that it is situated “within disparate academic domains” (2005, p.122).

This side-lining of volunteering from paid work is in spite of the existence of volunteering and philanthropy prior to industrialisation. Edgell comments on the prevalence of non-industrial activity by noting Williams’ stance that the importance of unpaid work for society makes it clear that “not all work has been commodified and that non-monetized exchange remains significant” (Williams, 2002 in Edgell, 2006, p.25).

In their work on what they term ‘volunteerability’, Meijis, Ten Hoorn and Brudney (2006) argue that the key difference between paid and unpaid work is that in paid labour markets the responsibility to adapt lies with the unemployed, while in the unpaid labour market the organisation must adapt in order to recruit the volunteers needed. This might involve ‘lowering the bar’ of recruitment, which is less likely to happen in the paid labour market although an alternative would be to broaden the view of what necessary experience and skills were needed. The need for voluntary organisations to be flexible with recruitment was raised by Gay in her research on volunteering and employability in relation to the long-term unemployed where she noted that “...it is difficult to believe that volunteer

managers, who are often desperate for helpers, would turn down anyone but the patently unsuitable” (1998, p.62). The language of desperation is not often used in reference to the paid labour market and so this raises an interesting point about how recruitment for paid work varies from recruitment for unpaid work.

There are implications of this, for volunteering itself, but also for the relationship between volunteering and employability. If volunteer-involving organisations recruit volunteers out of ‘desperation’, or with lower recruitment requirements, it has several impacts: they may attract people who require a higher level of support which may require them to invest more heavily in training and mentoring, it may stigmatise volunteering for prospective participants, and it may impact the view that employers hold towards volunteering. The idea that people are unlikely to be turned away is interesting in view of the demographics of volunteering. It seems that particular sections of the population are not as likely to volunteer, for example: unemployed people, people from deprived areas (Danson, 2003; Scottish Government, 2010), which might suggest a complete lack of interest rather than a fear of exclusion. The demographics of those excluded from the paid labour market are similar to that of those excluded from the voluntary labour market (Danson, 2003; Institute for Volunteering Research, 2004; Mejis et al., 2006) which Danson suggests indicates that the skills and assets mismatches in the paid labour market are being replicated in the voluntary labour market “with the less skilled and qualified not welcomed/not considered as having a role to play in volunteering” (Danson, 2003, p.19).

Speakman, Drake and Hawkins (2001) argue that every job in the paid labour market has an equivalent volunteering role that can help with preparation for paid work. Utilising this opportunity to gain skills depends upon an individual’s knowledge of their own strategic career plan as well as both the paid and unpaid labour markets, and their ability to make the connection between the two. The views of employers on the extent to which an ‘equivalent volunteering role’ provides the skills and experiences required for a paid job will also impact on whether it is possible for an individual to move from the unpaid to the paid role.

3.3.2 *Public policy on employment and unemployment*

Haugh and Kitson (2007) argue that New Labour policy on employment was mainly focussed on the supply side, e.g. Pathways to Work, which focused on compulsory

training and work-focussed interviews. Those interventions aimed to prepare individuals for work, but did little to increase the demand in the labour market. The authors argue that the third sector, and in particular social enterprises, increase the demand for labour by bringing marginalised people into the labour market and providing opportunities for training and support, as well as creating new opportunities for work. As such, this sector plays an important role, complementing the private and public sectors. This view was supported by McQuaid et al (2005) who argued that the third sector and social economy could play an important part in the employability of those further from the labour market. To put this in context, however, it is notable that third sector finances across the United Kingdom have been impacted by the wider economic conditions (Skills -Third Sector, 2011; Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations, 2012)

Government support for the Third Sector has included an expansion of social enterprises, which pursue social aims through trading, often supplemented by volunteers. Although this expansion is welcomed, Birch & Whittam (2008) argue that the accompanying focus on citizenship as ‘employment participation’ limits social enterprises’ ability to innovate. So while the sector can play a role in employment objectives, it is important that this is not their primary focus. In addition, it is argued that the social economy engages with those who are traditionally excluded from the labour markets; providing support, training and development opportunities in order to help move people ‘up the labour market queue’ (Haugh and Kitson, 2007, p.989). This suggests that an expanding social economy may help to grow labour market demand.

During the latter stages of the Labour UK Government, a development in social policy in relation to volunteering and employment was the creation of the ‘Volunteering Options’ programme previously mentioned. Funded by the Department of Work and Pensions and delivered through Job Centre Plus and delivery partners across Scotland, England and Wales, it offered volunteering opportunities to those who had been unemployed for six months or more (Department for Work and Pensions, 2009a). The difference between this programme and those which had gone before was the outcomes sought: “That the DWP are not seeking hard job outcomes for the Volunteering Options programme “presents an opportunity to strike a balance between the actual lack of evidence regarding volunteering and employability, and the genuinely positive role that volunteering can play” (Volunteer Development Scotland, unpublished-a, p.2). The Work Programme that replaced Volunteering Options when the Coalition Government was elected, was built on

a payment by results model, and therefore sought hard job outcomes from prime and subcontractors, with payment being made once the individual had achieved sustained employment (Department for Work and Pensions, 2012b; Fothergill, 2013).

Related to this, there was some concern from the Volunteer Centres in England that relationships with funders could become fraught as expectations that volunteering can move people into employment are not met due to the complexity of the relationship between volunteering and employability (Ockenden and Hill, 2009). The research found that funders were more likely to be motivated by hard evidence that volunteering had moved people directly into paid work, while Volunteer Centres felt that the wider societal benefits of volunteering were important. This is particularly relevant given the breadth of evidence that unemployment can quickly impact individual mood and outlook (Wanberg, 1995; Gowan and Gatewood, 1997; Howe et al., 2012).

Lindsay (2009, p.27) argues that “the concept of employability has been deployed to describe the objectives of the economic strategies promoted by supra-national institutions, and the labour market policies pursued by national governments”. He then describes its deployment in the UK specifically as “a central tenet of so-called Third Way policies to promote economic growth and social inclusion”. This policy agenda was grounded in the belief that inclusion was delivered through paid work and education, and that everyone who could get involved, should get involved (Powell, 2000). However, this agenda was subject to critique due to the focus on “productive rather than human potential, so that formal economic activity takes precedence over cultural, political, environmental, social and even nurturing activity” (Powell, 2000, p.46). Policy delivery continued to be driven by the supply-side rather than the demand side, meaning that even when people invested in their employability, they may not find suitable employment as a result.

3.3.3 *Recession and rolling back the state*

Volunteer Development Scotland (unpublished-a) suggest that little is known about the impact of a recession on volunteering as surveys on the levels of volunteering have only been in existence since the 1990s. However, Volunteer Centres in England reported increasing enquiries for volunteering during 2009 (Wiggins, 2009). They suggested that this was a result of an increase in people looking to gain additional skills and experience

to help them move back into paid work. In the same period, the number of Volunteer Centres in England delivering employability programmes also increased. The majority of these programmes were delivered in partnership with Job Centre Plus (Ockenden and Hill, 2009).

Job Centre Plus are responsible for the delivery of Department for Work and Pensions policy initiatives at the local level, some of which involve participants having the opportunity to volunteer, e.g., Get Britain Working (Department for Work and Pensions, 2013), while others involve participants undertaking unpaid placements with charitable organisations (Department for Work and Pensions, 2011a). It is important to make a clear distinction between these two types of activity, and the role that volunteer-involving organisations have in supporting individuals on the programmes. Some Department for Work and Pensions policy is not specifically focused on either volunteering or charitable organisations, but participants can undertake volunteering activity as way of enhancing their skills, e.g. the Youth Contract (Department for Work and Pensions, 2012c) and Supporting Lone Parents into Work (Department for Work and Pensions, 2012a).

It is worthy of note that Job Centre Plus often place geographical restrictions on those who can take part in employability programmes, for example, programmes which have received funding from the Deprived Area Fund can only support those from particular postcode areas (Department for Work and Pensions, 2009b).

Late in 2010, the UK Government published its “Giving Green Paper” which set out how it aimed to create the “Big Society”. The Green Paper drew on a series of essays from ‘leaders and thinkers’ as evidence (Cabinet Office, 2010). The resulting “Giving White Paper” was published in May 2011 (Cabinet Office, 2011). The overarching aim of the Big Society is to generate a population with “more control, supported to pursue their collective and individual goals, and [are] less reliant upon the state” (Cabinet Office, 2010, p.4). This will take place under the three strands of empowering communities, opening up public services and encouraging social action. The policy sits alongside new Government policy on “Localism” and “Public Service Reform”(Cabinet Office, 2010, p.4).

Volunteering features highly on the Big Society agenda, with the UK Government recognising the role it can play in social cohesion, justice and the economy. Specifically

it is mentioned as a means of keeping in touch with, and preparing for employment for those who are unemployed. However, with the exception of its role as a means of Civil Service professional development, it ignores the role that volunteering might play in up-skilling the existing workforce. Although it mentions a role for business in supporting staff to donate both time and money, it does not mention the role of business in recognising volunteering as an alternative experience to paid work (Cabinet Office, 2011).

The UK Government used the figures from the World Giving Index 2010 to argue that, at 29th in the league of volunteer involvement, the UK was in need of the Big Society interventions to improve its participation rating (Cabinet Office, 2010). Stevens (2011) argues that this is problematic due to the way volunteering is defined, incentivised, and in some cases required, by governments across the globe, an argument echoing Lyons, Wijkstrom and Clary (1998) and Danson (2003) who stated that meaningful comparisons of volunteer involvement cannot be taken for these reasons.

In a publication reviewing the levels of volunteering in England, it was noted that data from the Citizenship Survey suggested that the level of formal and informal volunteering in England and Wales had actually decreased between 2007/8 and 2009/10. The author suggests that this ‘debunks the assumption’ that those seeking employment will undertake volunteering as a route back to work (Hill, 2011). Issues around this include the impact of longer working hours, and the impact of volunteering on the time available to seek paid work. In the same paper the author states that “the national data suggests that faith in the ability of volunteers to fill the vacuum left by a retraction of the state is misplaced and misguided” (Hill, 2011, p.2). In addition to this, he raises the issue of conflict between the reduced level of resources available, and the increased need for volunteers, who still require resources to be managed and supported.

In a critique of the Big Society, Kisby (2010) questions the underlying assumptions, grounded in Conservative ideology, that the state is bad and that everything outside the state is good. He argues that the previous Labour Government promoted the community and voluntary sector through increased funding in return for more responsibility but that the financial situation of the UK economy had increased the intensity of the shifts, allowing the government to push through this agenda. He suggests that rather than being a new and innovative initiative, that the Big Society echoes the Active Citizenship agenda

of the 1980s, similarly ignoring income inequality and the need to be underpinned by social justice.

3.3.4 *The role of employers*

Employers play a key role in shaping the labour market in the United Kingdom, in particular in relation to vacancy characteristics and recruitment policies. Employers' attitudes towards paid or unpaid experience, qualifications and length of time spent in, and out of work can impact on entry to the labour market (Hillage and Pollard, 1998; Devins and Hogarth, 2005; McQuaid et al., 2005; Lindsay, 2009), and can be reinforcing in excluding particular groups such as the young male unemployed (Rubery, 1994; Devins and Hogarth, 2005). McQuaid, Green and Danson (2005) suggest that employers' attitudes must be tackled in order to assist entry to the labour market by those traditionally excluded.

White and Gallie (1994) also made the argument that employers impact on individuals' mobility at both the entry and progression points in employment. Therefore upward mobility in terms of career progression is also in the hands of employers, and their attitudes towards the qualities needed to progress. This means that returns from investment in education and training can be subject to 'differentiation' across employees, and it is likely to be a similar picture for volunteering.

Research on employers' attitudes to the qualifications, skills and characteristics sought in new recruits provides useful context to their attitudes to volunteering. According to research carried out by the Department for Work and Pensions (Newton et al., 2005) employers seek people who have core skills and characteristics and can be trained to undertake a role. Qualifications are viewed as evidence that an individual is able to learn, but are not viewed to be as important as skills and characteristics unless there is a statutory requirement for a qualification. The attitude of Scottish employers (Gasteen and Houston, 2005) is that qualifications gave an indication of skills, rather than of intellect or motivation. The DWP research also found that larger employers were more likely to be able to afford the cost of training staff, and were also more able to cope with people who had been out of work for some time through flexible support.

In their review of human resource practices, Devins and Hogarth (2005) emphasise the key role of employers in allowing access to jobs, and that some practices in use by employers are inadvertently contributing to labour market mismatch. Their research found, for example, that employers (particularly those in 'lower-level occupations') used word of mouth and internal means of recruitment, thereby excluding those who were not linked in to that employer through a network of contacts. The authors described the models of recruitment used which started from communicating the vacancy through to transition into the workplace, and noted that application forms and interviews were the most used methods of recruiting new staff, and that sifting was carried out in order to consider the qualifications, employment history and experience of applicants. The authors suggested that these practices were a key element in the demand side of the labour market, but that the underlying policies could be exclusionary. Research on internal labour markets in Britain and Germany had similar findings (Windolf, 1986). Similar exclusionary practices and attitudes were found in research carried out into rural labour markets in Cumbria (Canny, 2004), which revealed that young men in particular were disadvantaged in the labour market due to low skills' expectations and the reluctance of employers to provide training and education.

3.3.5 *Employer Supported Volunteering (ESV)*

Employer Supported Volunteering (ESV) is a way that employers can harness volunteering as a means of making links with the local community, empowering staff and raising their profile. ESV allows employers to support staff volunteering through either donations of time or money. The volunteering activity can be chosen by either the employer or employee and carried out on an individual or group basis. In her review on employee volunteering, Lukka (2000, p.3) suggests that the relationship between business and volunteering fits with "a shift in the ethos of volunteering itself, moving from the idea of a 'gift of time' into a mutual exchange relationship between the volunteer and the volunteer-involving organisation".

According to the National Survey of Volunteering and Giving (Low et al., 2007) the number of ESV schemes in England and Wales rose between 1997 and 2007. There is no equivalent data available for Scotland. In a paper written to focus on the ESV aspects of the National Survey of Volunteering and Giving, McBain and Machin (2007) suggest that the rise in the number of schemes is due to a combination of employers realising the

benefits of having such a scheme, and of the Labour Party promoting ESV by asking the public sector to take a lead. They also found that ESV is more prevalent in large companies with over 250 staff, than medium or small ones.

Rhetoric on ESV schemes focuses on the skills gained by employees while undertaking volunteering activities (Brewis, 2004; McBain and Machin, 2007). This is seen as a benefit to the organisation and the individual as volunteering opportunities can be selected to match skills that the employee would like to develop. In some cases, the related skills development is tracked and recognised through personal development planning and can be potentially used to identify new roles for staff to undertake (Brewis, 2004; CEV, 2007; 2009). In spite of this, when participants in ESV programmes were asked about the impact of ESV they did not comment specifically on career development, instead focussing on personal satisfaction (McBain and Machin, 2007).

A review of the Barclays Bank employee volunteering programme (Brewis, 2004) looked at the impact of volunteering on bank staff as well as attitudes towards the programme. Despite Barclay's staff having a range of business specific skills, the majority of volunteering undertaken was of a more physical nature. It suggested that those employees who took part in the programme were able to use existing skills and develop new ones, and that these impacts were greater the more often employees volunteered. For managers, ESV allowed them to see less experienced staff undertake leadership roles which would then help with their workplace development. However, 'the inclusion of volunteering in the personal development plans (PDP) of employees also emerged as a contentious issue' as "some felt that it signalled management support for their activities, while others argued that volunteering should remain an essentially private, personal affair, unregulated by the company" (Brewis, 2004, p.21). This is an argument supported by Ellis Paine et al (Ellis Paine et al., 2010, p.13) who suggest that "we enter a grey area when employer-supported volunteering becomes part of a discussion in a member of staff's supervision meeting with his or her manager, and move across the coercion boundary if a link is made between participation in such a scheme and prospects for promotion".

The literature review of employee volunteering carried out by Lukka (2000) suggests that employee volunteering opens up a 'massive pool of potential volunteers' as people are more likely to get involved if they are asked and employed people are more likely to volunteer than their unemployed counterparts. There is evidence that 'the ask' is an

important element of people becoming involved in volunteering as people would prefer to be asked by someone that they know and trust in order that they are clear about the commitment required (Baird, 2005). Whether people prefer ‘the ask’ to come from employers is worthy of further consideration.

3.3.6 *Employers’ attitudes towards volunteering*

Despite the key role that employers play in shaping demand in the labour market, and the role that volunteering is suggested to have in making the labour market more accessible, it appears that few studies on volunteering, employment or employability have sought to gather employers’ attitudes to volunteering (as noted by Lindsay, 2009; Lee, 2010a). The notable exceptions being small studies commissioned by v (an organisation which supports young people in England to volunteer) and VSO respectively (Cook and Jackson, 2006; v. and YouGov., 2009; Gammon and Ellison, 2010) all of which have a focus on the views of a small sample of employers. It could be argued that employers’ beliefs (and bias) towards the concept of volunteering itself, and their personal experiences of it, are just as important as to whether or not they view volunteering as a means of gaining skills and experience that is useful in the paid labour market, echoing the argument of White and Gaillie (1994) that there is differentiation in how employers treat qualifications.

Research on the personal values of managers in Canada and Ireland found that “managerial decision making is not a value-free process” (McGuire et al., 2008, p.346). Although the research focused on managerial attitudes to training and development, the finding that “organizations with well-structured and positive approaches to learning and development will have a greater impact on the value that line managers attach to training and development” (McGuire et al., 2008, p.346), suggests that a parallel situation where an organisation has a well-structured and positive approach to volunteering, may be more likely to value volunteering in recruits. As such, the organisational context is as important as the view of the individual. If employers uphold traditional bias towards volunteering (Sheard, 1995; Harris and Rochester, 2001; Danson, 2003; Rochester et al., 2010) as being an activity for the middle aged, middle class, time rich, centred on charity shops and the elderly, they are perhaps less likely to view the outcomes as being of substance for the world of work. Alternatively, if they understand the transferable skills that can be gained from volunteering, the applicability of the volunteering experience to the world of

paid employment and the potential impacts on personal development, then they may be more likely to view it as a positive addition to a CV.

Although there is little research on the subject, one report (Cook and Jackson, 2006), carried out by the Chartered Management Institute with funding from VSO investigates the relationship between overseas volunteering and employability from the viewpoint of both returning volunteers, and potential employers. VSO organise gap years abroad and so the research focuses on whether this particular type of volunteering helps develop what is termed 'critical management skills'. That said, the arising themes are relevant to the wider view of volunteering and employability.

Almost all the managers who took part in the research agreed that a long-term volunteering placement overseas would 'broaden skills and experiences', while just under half felt that it 'increases employability' (Cook and Jackson, 2006, p.3). Managers were given a list of development activities and were asked to choose which they felt were effective in developing management skills. In relation to volunteering, 'local voluntary projects' were rated more highly than 'long-term overseas voluntary projects' which the authors suggest is the result of managers having had 'less experience and exposure to its benefits'. This suggests that volunteering is highly regarded by those with experience of it, but typically disregarded by those without experience, a finding which is echoed by a study commissioned by v on workplace based volunteering (Gammon and Ellison, 2010).

In both pieces of research (Cook and Jackson, 2006; Gammon and Ellison, 2010), there was evidence that experience of volunteering varied by the size of organisation and the sector, respectively. Larger organisations and those in the third sector were more likely to have managers with volunteering experience, which is similar to findings about the spread of employee volunteering schemes. The research commissioned by v found that managers who volunteered themselves were more likely to manage people who volunteered, which suggests that managers may encourage their staff to volunteer, may be more likely to speak about volunteering in the workplace, or may have recruited people who volunteer having recognised the relevant skills base of those individuals.

The VSO research (Cook and Jackson, 2006) attempted to align the skills gaps in organisations and the skills developed by volunteers and found that there was some alignment, therefore concluding that returning overseas volunteers were an untapped

source of management potential. The v research echoed this finding for volunteers more generally. This consideration marks a departure from only considering the supply side which dominates most research on the subject.

In relation to the impact of long-term volunteering, most managers felt that employability would be enhanced “due to broader skills development, experience and confidence, although some thought this would depend on the type of job that was being considered” (Cook and Jackson, 2006, p.14). This suggests that, for employers, the role of volunteering will vary dependent on the type of job applied for. Despite this, a small number of managers voiced concern that volunteers may end up being “out of date with the latest thinking or market trends” (Cook and Jackson, 2006, p.14). This is analogous to research on career breaks which supports the view that retuning to work can be difficult (Clem, 2011), and/or carry income penalties (Arun et al., 2004) as a result of interruption to the development of human capital, employer discrimination, or the inability to return to a similar job. A career break for volunteering may be subject to similar issues, although it could be argued that there was continual human capital development. Employer attitudes to short term volunteering which was viewed more positively and employers could see the benefits (Cook and Jackson, 2006). Being out of date relating to a period of time spent overseas is unlikely to be relevant to the volunteering being considered in this research but being out of date due to a period of time spent outwith the labour market might be. Finally, employers in the v research felt that volunteering was less likely to help with staff engagement and retention (Gammon and Ellison, 2010).

Volunteers in the VSO study, reflecting on their experiences, reported that employers did not always fully appreciate their skills. They also suggested that employers’ attitudes varied, with those in the private sector being less aware of the benefits of volunteering and those in the international charity sector viewing their experience in a much more positive light. This is perhaps to be expected given the focus of the research, although the attitudes of employers from different sectors is worthy of further consideration.

This links to the requirement for individuals to spell out for prospective employers what they have achieved through volunteering, described as “clearly set out in their CVs and at interviews, the specific skills that they had developed and how they had applied these in achieving successful outcomes” (Cook and Jackson, 2006, p.17). Employers in the study were most interested in “how prospective employees presented themselves and their

experience” (Cook and Jackson, 2006, p.16). This suggests that having volunteering experience is not enough and that some effort has to be made to articulate the outcomes of volunteering for personal development including its relevance to the post, an issue raised by Hillage and Pollard (1998) in their review of employability. In addition, almost half of employers felt that accreditation would present volunteering in a more positive light, for example some form of certification.

Research commissioned by v and carried out by YouGov (v. and YouGov., 2009), suggests that employers’ attitudes to volunteering are not all positive. For example, they found that around one quarter of employers felt that job candidates with volunteering experience were no different to those without. Less than half felt that volunteers were more motivated employees or had better skills and attitudes. This echoes findings from research carried out by the Department for Work and Pensions which found that that volunteering may be taken into account for young people with little work experience, but that “they prefer work examples if possible” (Newton et al., 2005, p.51). This suggests that employers feel that volunteering experience is lesser than paid work experience, and may only be considered as an alternative to work experience for young people.

3.4 The Employability Context

3.4.1 *The constituent parts of employability*

Mejis, Ten Hoorn & Brudney (2006, p.40) argue that employability (and volunteerability) operates at three levels: micro, meso and macro. This incorporates the individuals’ skills alongside the labour market context and societal context. This differs from Hillage and Pollard (1998) and the McQuaid and Lindsay model (2005) which also include personal circumstances such as caring responsibilities and access to transport. All three focus on the importance of the labour market, the macro economy, recruitment and policy in shaping individuals access to the labour market. Despite the focus on the individual interaction with the labour market, often the individual, rather than the accessibility of the labour market is viewed as the problem.

McQuaid and Lindsay (2005) suggest that a person might be viewed to possess relevant skills and experience, but may still not be able to enter into the labour market as a result of employer attitudes to experience, and the experiences of others in the labour market seeking similar work. This will depend upon employer preferences for particular skills

or experiences when filling vacancies, as well as the state of the labour market. In a tight or loose labour market, employability may bear different characteristics.

3.4.2 *Public policy on employability*

Employment Law is reserved to the UK Government and is delivered by the Department for Work and Pensions and Job Centre Plus. The Scottish Government has shared responsibility for training for employment and delivers this through strategies such as “Workforce Plus”, “More Choices More Chances” and “Skills for Scotland”. The United Kingdom policy on employability is mostly situated within Welfare to Work policy and has traditionally taken a supply side approach which focuses on up-skilling the unemployed to prepare them for paid employment. This is embedded in a belief that moving people into work will provide them with a route out of poverty. As the Scottish Government has to work within the confines of reserved policies on labour markets and welfare benefits, it has limited influence and is therefore unable to “fundamentally challenge the rationale and approach of UK government funded ‘work first’ approaches to employability (Lindsay, 2009, p.41).

Meijis, Ten Hoorn and Brudney (2006, p.38) argue that public policy on employability typically involves “strategies aimed at communicating, stimulating, supporting and enforcing instruments of employability aimed at general or specific target groups”. This suggests, as others have asserted previously (e.g. McQuaid et al., 2005; McQuaid and Lindsay, 2005; Lindsay, 2009), that government policy on employability takes a supply side focus, where individuals outside the labour market are targeted with limited consideration of the demand factors working in the labour market.

3.4.3 *The employability infrastructure*

The Workforce Plus framework (Scottish Executive, 2006) and the update, Working For Growth (Scottish Government, 2012e) sets out how Scottish Government will support employability in Scotland through partnership working. The structure of Employability delivery in Scotland involves the Scottish Employability Forum, the National Delivery Group, Third Sector Employability Forum, Health and Employability Delivery Group and local employability groups which have had refreshed membership and remits from 2012. These networks and groups are made up of representatives of organisations who have a role in employability at the national or local level including Skills Development

Scotland, Job Centre Plus, local higher and further education institutions and the third sector.

Local delivery of employability services includes the aforementioned organisations, as well as a number of smaller organisations working in partnership. While the partnership approach is viewed as effective by policymakers, there is evidence that there is the potential for gaps in provision, and specifically, that those with multiple barriers may not be able to access the supported they need (McGregor et al., 2002). In addition, there is evidence that a partnership approach can make it challenging to track individual outcomes, particularly where individuals are accessing multiple providers (McGregor et al., 2003)

An Employability Learning Network cross-cut these agencies until the Scottish Parliamentary Elections in May 2011, after which the Scottish Government merged the network with the Community Regeneration and Tackling Poverty network, to form the Employability and Tackling Poverty learning network. A Strategic Skills Pipeline was created in order to recognise that people enter the labour market at different stages, and to assist delivery organisations to meet gaps in delivery, and to support people on the road to employment (Scottish Executive, 2006; Scottish Government, 2012e). The Working for Growth report outlined the need for partnership working between Scottish funded employability programmes and UK funded ones, including the need to cooperate with the Work Programme Providers in Scotland, which has been done in part by giving them representation on the National Delivery Group, and by ensuring that interventions are complementary (Scottish Government, 2012e). The policy framework views employability as wider than individuals lacking skills, and plans to use devolved powers to improve the employability of Scottish citizens. However, they have to work within the constraints of reserved UK Government policy on labour markets and welfare reform.

3.5 The Relationship Between Volunteering and Employability

3.5.1 *The conventional wisdom*

In many government policies, research papers and promotional materials for volunteering there is a belief that volunteering and employability are inherently connected. For Lee (2010a, p.9) this is “predicated on the assumption that essentially volunteering is analogous to paid work”. A similar viewpoint was suggested by Gay (1998, p.59) who

argued that the skills gained and tasks undertaken were directly relevant to the paid labour market but must be “of the kind and quality that is in demand in the labour market”. In other words: not amateurish. Gay goes on to detail that the skills gained through volunteering matched those needed in the paid labour market, an argument regularly made by researchers (Cook and Jackson, 2006; Ockenden, 2007; Ockenden and Hill, 2009). The skills themselves may well be a match to need, but the ability to translate those skills on a CV or in an interview, to something relevant to particular paid employment is a further skill that not all volunteers will have been able to develop, an issue raised by Hillage and Pollard (1998). This view is supported by research with secondary school pupils in Scotland which found that they had difficulty identifying skills gained from part time work (Howieson et al., 2006).

In his own fieldwork on the experiences of Incapacity Benefit recipients in the labour market, Lee (2010a) found that many were undertaking menial tasks that were less relevant to their aspirations in the labour market, therefore not providing specific experiences that might support their move into paid employment, such as leadership. This issue was raised by Danson (2003) where he suggested that those who were less skilled were not seen, either by themselves, or by the organisation, to have a role in volunteering beyond limited functions. This will impact significantly on an individual’s ability to access paid work as a result of volunteering.

According to Gay (1998), the thinking behind encouraging unemployed people to volunteer in the 1990s was that there was a lot of work that needed done and a lot of people with nothing to do. Based on the outlook of job seekers towards volunteering, Gay (1998, p.58) sorted job seekers into two categories: career builders “who were consciously building up a base of knowledge and experience that would provide a route out of unemployment” and job hopefuls “people looking for work of some kind: they were less focussed and goal oriented than the career builders but saw that volunteering might help them”. Both are aware of volunteering being a potential route to employment and therefore keen to take the opportunities it provided. This view was supported by evidence that, where training and support were available to volunteers, they would move into work sooner.

Volunteer-involving organisations traditionally do provide some forms of training and support to volunteers in order for them to be able to carry out their volunteering role

effectively (Zimmeck, 2000). Where this aligns with the training required to move into the labour market this may be a route to employment success where training is not usually available or suitable and raises issues for the individual. This also puts responsibility on volunteer-involving organisations to prepare volunteers for work. According to the European Volunteer Centre this should really be funded and supported by the state while protecting the role of volunteer involvers from becoming more aligned with that of employment agencies (CEV, 2007). Where the state cannot or does not support this, volunteer-involving organisations have to balance their need for volunteers with the volunteers' need to find paid employment. In some cases, organisations are not equipped to provide this, and therefore the employability of volunteers is often a 'by product' of their volunteering role.

In relation to Volunteer Centres, they report that employability programmes have been successful in supporting volunteers into paid employment (Ockenden and Hill, 2009). Equally, research into the volunteering and employability experiences of refugee women found that employability programmes' set up for support were more successful in moving people into paid employment (Tomlinson, 2009). The caveat for this research is that the majority of volunteers found work with the same organisation or an organisation they had had contact with in the course of their volunteering. This suggests that networks and personal contact were important in securing paid employment rather than the gain of, and ability to articulate, transferable skills. This is a common trend (Granovetter, 1973; Corcoran et al., 1980; Devins and Hogarth, 2005).

Government Welfare to Work policies in particular encourage people to volunteer with an aim of getting them into paid work as a result. There has been little critique of this policy position, the blame for which Lee (2010a) puts firmly at the door of what he terms the 'volunteering research community': a term used to describe those organisations and individuals engaged in research into volunteering in the UK. Taylor (2005, p.120) also notes that research into volunteering lacks "a critical perspective that acknowledges the role of structures of power".

In fact, much of the 'volunteering research community', with the exception of academic researchers, is formed of individuals and institutes based within government funded volunteering infrastructure organisations. Often these organisations play the dual role of service delivery agent for government, and researcher and evaluator of volunteering

activity, programmes and projects, which limits their capacity to critique policy objectives and often leaves them having to carefully navigate their position on the role of volunteering. An example of this is the “Volunteering Works” paper by the Institute for Volunteering Research which states that “volunteering has a significant impact on the development of skills amongst those that take part and makes an important contribution to improving their employability in many cases” (Ockenden, 2007, p.28), and then goes on to say “there is a lack of evidence linking volunteering directly to employability” only two pages later (Ockenden, 2007, p.30). The dual role also comes into play when linking volunteering to policy objectives; on the one hand it can be evidenced that volunteering can help meet policy objectives on employment, education and skills, but on the other, it should not be used as a tool of policy.

As volunteering is viewed as a way of gaining skills and experience, it is not only related to those out of work but also can lead to career progression (Lukka, 2000, p.3): “community involvement is one way to develop skills that can lead to career progression or even moving into a new field of working”. This aspect has gone largely ignored in research in favour of a focus on those who are out of work.

Research in Canada suggests that volunteering is encouraged to immigrants “to improve their access to the Canadian labour market” (Schugurensky et al., 2005). It is viewed as a means by which immigrants can get experience in a Canadian workplace, create networks and acquire a local reference for job applications (Also noted in the study on refugees and volunteering in Stopforth, 2001). It also suggests that informal learning has a key role to play for volunteers. However, the same research notes the lack of evidence of the skills’ gain from volunteering and the effectiveness of volunteering in relation to learning.

The conventional wisdom does not just arise from research papers and is perpetuated in guidance for volunteer management. Practice papers on volunteers’ management make it clear that volunteers should be advised to place volunteering prominently on CV’s and job application forms rather than “an after-thought” (Polis, 2009, p.1). In addition, a review of student volunteering suggested that “volunteering experience is said to deliver an edge to candidates with broadly similar degrees” (National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement, 2009, p.20). Similar claims are made by a handbook for student volunteers on volunteering for employability (Speakman et al., 2001).

In a “hot topic” for an online volunteering magazine, Energize, based on the United States, Ellis (2013) critiques the media for basing the promotion of volunteering as a route to employability as being based on “common wisdom, rather than hard data”. She argues that the case for volunteering and employability is based on the assumptions that volunteering develops the transferrable skills that are applicable to available jobs, that the effect is expected from all volunteering, and that the individual traits and personality can be discounted. Although volunteering may look good on a CV, demonstrate an interest in community, an interest in others, and an ability to work, not all volunteering opportunities afford the individual a change to have “employable experiences”, as the volunteering activity is “low level and unconnected to the labour market”. This argument echoes the findings of Lee’s (2010a) research on the volunteering experiences of incapacity benefit recipients, many of whom had volunteering roles that did not afford the opportunity for skills development, and in particular, did not offer key skills such as use of Information Technology.

Ellis (2013) makes the argument that the demographics of those unemployed and seeking work are important, as are the field they have left, specifically in relation to whether that field is still hiring paid staff, or whether it no longer exists. She specifically notes that age plays a role in whether or not volunteering can enhance employability, stating that while it is important for young people and graduates, for adults it, “depends on what they have been doing as employees, and on what they choose to do as a volunteer” (Ellis, 2013, p.2). This suggests that for young people and graduates, volunteering will be more important as there will be less paid work experience on a CV, while for adults, the impact of volunteering will depend on the individuals’ career path, and how their volunteering complements it. Related to the age of individuals, Ellis argues that the role of volunteering may be as an opportunity to try out a career choice: “volunteering is a low risk way to explore new career fields and different work settings” (2013, p.2).

3.5.2 *The qualitative difference between volunteering and work*

In his thesis examining the relationship between volunteering and employability for Incapacity Benefit recipients, Lee (2010a) reaches the conclusion that volunteering and work are ‘qualitatively different’. Similarly, Gay (1998) suggests that volunteering as a route to employment is not an option for everyone.

Volunteering is often viewed as an altruistic act within which an individual donates his or her spare time to an organisation with a need. What is not always considered, however, is that potential volunteers have to go through HR processes similar to that for those seeking work: application forms, interviews, disclosures and probationary periods (Zimmeck, 2000). It is not something that is entered into casually, or quickly, and research has suggested that the bureaucracy related to volunteering recruitment can lead to individuals losing momentum to volunteer (Institute for Volunteering Research, 2004). Related to this, Wilson and Musick (1997) suggest that in order to become involved in volunteering, individuals must have human, social and cultural capital present. They also suggest that education and social networks are important for people wishing to volunteer, as well as being further enhanced by volunteering.

A further consideration is that the roles undertaken by volunteers are the roles requiring to be done by the volunteer-involving organisations, which may not relate to the opportunities in the labour market (Lee, 2010a) or to their career ambitions. In the Incapacity Benefits field, volunteers tended to undertake roles similar to their previous paid work or occupation, rather than in a new or different field, which may limit their ability to gain the necessary experience to access paid work. In addition, to gain a volunteering role; individuals have to demonstrate enthusiasm, ability and commitment, much in the same way as they might when applying for paid work. Volunteer-involving organisations exist to meet their aims and objectives. In some cases, the aims and objectives of the organisations may include assisting volunteers and service users with employability, but in many cases this is a by-product. As described by Lee (2010a, p.147): “The organisations may well be sympathetic to the employability related aspirations and motivations of the volunteers, but placements are not designed to enhance particular skills or necessarily connect in any way to the paid labour market”.

Similarly, Danson (2003, p.4) suggests that “there may be conflicts between what volunteers want and what organisations operating in delivering contracts and services require”. This argument is supported by Ellis (2013, p.2) who suggests that organisations do not construct volunteering opportunities to help individuals build job-related skills because “most organisations seek volunteers already able to do more skilled work”.

Hirst (2000) raises a related issue regarding the role of organisations promoting volunteering opportunities, arguing that some organisations use the employability aspects

of volunteering to “sell themselves”, but must be aware of the needs of volunteers in relation to employability to be able to do so. A related point is raised by Ellis (2013) regarding the wider role of volunteer-involvers and whether they actively seek the role of “employment counsellors”.

3.5.3 *The impacts that volunteering can have*

While volunteering might be qualitatively different from paid work, and therefore not always a suitable preparation for it, it is clear that it can have positive impacts on volunteers. For people outwith the labour market, it can provide a source of self-esteem, confidence, networks of support and routes to other opportunities (CEV, 2007; Tomlinson, 2009; Volunteer Development Scotland, unpublished-a), all of which are identified as key in employability research and policy (Hillage and Pollard, 1998; McQuaid and Lindsay, 2005; Scottish Executive, 2006; Futureskills Scotland, 2007; Scottish Government, 2007; Lindsay, 2009; Scottish Government, 2012e). These gains might indirectly provide access to the paid labour market, for example starting them on a path towards employment.

In some circumstances, the support of an employability project involving volunteering can help give people the confidence to apply for paid employment (e.g. Cordon and Sainsbury, 2005). In this research, those who were not ready to move on to employment felt that their supported volunteering experience would help them once they were ready. This suggests that volunteering alone is ‘not enough’ to get people ready for paid work, an idea alluded to by Lee (2010a) in his discussion of pre-employability. The Institute for Volunteering Research also suggest that volunteering can have a role in moving people *towards* employment rather than directly into employment (Ockenden and Hill, 2009).

For refugees entering the United Kingdom, volunteering can provide a route to integration in society and potentially into paid employment. Specifically, the role of volunteering in building confidence, practising English and having access to a work environment was mentioned, although it was suggested that this had to form part of a “long term view” (Stopforth, 2001). The same research suggests that volunteers and refugee organisations are positive about the impact of volunteering on employability, although this positivity is not borne out in the statistical analysis of movement into paid employment. The research

found that those with British graduate qualifications and volunteering experience fared better in the labour market than those who volunteered and were less qualified. This suggests that, in some circumstances, volunteering in combination with relevant qualifications can help provide a route to paid employment. It is not clear how someone with relevant qualifications and no volunteering experience might fare in the labour market.

Volunteering can include education or training, delivered either formally or informally, which can enhance volunteer knowledge or skills. In her report on the outcomes of a widening participation programme, Kenwright argues that providing training to volunteers is a means of investing in them, and demonstrating their worth. She suggests that volunteer-involving organisations are ideally placed to provide training as they are free from “the strict requirements of accreditation, timetables and vocational relevance that drive formal education institutions” (Kenwright, 2000, p.10).

Training for volunteers can range from role specific ‘on the job’ training, to more general training such as First Aid or teambuilding (Zimmeck, 2000). With or without accreditation, this might enhance volunteers’ confidence and skills and perhaps lead to more formal learning (Kenwright, 2000).

3.5.4 *Where volunteering stops short of enhancing employability*

Research carried out on behalf of the Department for Education and Skills on the relationship between volunteering and employability found a much more complicated relationship than expected (Hirst, 2000). The research participants were Jobseekers on the Job Centre Plus database, half of whom volunteered, and half of whom did not. They were quantitatively tracked over time to see how many moved off of Jobseekers Allowance during the period of the research, and qualitatively interviewed about their volunteering experience and how they felt it related to employability. The research reports difficulty in isolating volunteering from other causal factors, and that self-reported benefits are not played out by the statistics: “this strong endorsement of the impacts of voluntary activity on an individual’s employment prospects is not matched to anything like the same extent by an objective analysis of the differences in employment outcomes for volunteers compared to non-volunteers” (Hirst, 2000, p.46).

There may be a timing element to this finding as the author suggests that employability gains may not have yet led to “positive labour market outcomes” (Hirst, 2000, p.48), which indicates that the length of time spent volunteering has an impact on employability, and that there may be some time lag until improvement is evident. The period over which a piece of research is undertaken may not be sufficient for volunteering to have had an impact and led to employment. This issue is raised by Ellis (2013) who expands on the point to critique research that sees the gaining of paid employment as a success story, and furthermore makes the assumption that once work is found, the volunteer will give up volunteering. She argues that volunteering doesn’t have to end once work is found, and that doing so can demonstrate a lack of commitment, and a lack of respect for the organisation and its clients on the part of the individual.

Hirst (2000), describes how both personal characteristics and the characteristics of the volunteering undertaken were both key in whether volunteering would have an effect on employability. Reported benefits of volunteering were higher for those with poor social networks, the longer term unemployed, those with specific career aspirations and those who were initially motivated to volunteer. Statistically those experiencing specific disadvantages such as a criminal record were more likely to move off Jobseekers Allowance after a period of volunteering. That some other disadvantaged groups did not experience the same success rate raises questions about the reasons behind the impacts and suggests a more complicated picture than direct causality between volunteering and employability.

Similar to the Gay (1998) research, Hirst (2000) found that the research sample included those with specific career plans who set out to use volunteering as a route to a particular paid role. These career strategists reported employability benefits of volunteering which were not borne out in the statistical analysis. The author suggests that perhaps “they are prepared to wait longer for their ‘ideal’ job or training course to turn up” (Hirst, 2000, p.38). It may simply be the case that they felt positively about the personal impact of their volunteering.

The characteristics of volunteering reported to be important for employability included the opportunity for teamwork, training, management and support and the regular review of the volunteering role. Those having experienced these in a volunteering activity were more likely to report benefits from volunteering. Statistically, those who specifically had

access to training as a volunteer were more likely to have moved into paid work. This has implications for volunteer involvers in terms of what provisions they make for volunteers. In some cases, Volunteer Centres continue to support volunteers once they are in placement, but capacity for this is not always available (Ockenden and Hill, 2009).

In relation to informal learning through volunteering, Schugurensky, Slade and Luo (2005, p.5) note that it is not always recognised by the volunteer but, where it is, it is viewed by volunteers to be more significant than 'on the job' training. Informal learning can include discussions with other volunteers, working with others or observations and unofficial mentoring and can help the move into employment through establishing social networks. It is through sporadic contacts such as former workmates that people often access work opportunities (Granovetter, 1973).

Lindsay (2009, p.145) suggests that "it is important to note that the relationship between social capital and employability is likely to be mutually reinforcing rather than causal and uni-directional", therefore concluding that the relationship is not as linear as some research suggests. For some people, the paid labour market is simply not an option and volunteering can provide alternative activity that stops short of being paid work (Ockenden and Hill, 2009). However, the European Volunteer Centre (2007) has raised concern about paid jobs being replaced by volunteering.

Conversely, participants in Lee's research (2010a) reported that employers' attitudes to volunteering experience were not always positive and that they did not see volunteering being as valuable as paid work experience. This argument is reinforced by the evaluation of a Volunteering for Employability Skills project run by Nottingham Council for Voluntary Service by the University of York which found that participants felt that they had nothing to show for their volunteering experience and would have liked some form of certification (Cordon and Sainsbury, 2005). This suggests that although volunteers feel that volunteering has helped them, either their activity is unrecognised or they are lacking the ability to vocalise their personal development gains. A handbook of guidance for students to link volunteering with employability (Speakman et al., 2001) notes that while volunteering can give you valuable experiences, employers might not recognise these and so individuals have to be able to make the link between their experiences and the employment they seek.

Accreditation programmes are being developed to counter this, for example VSkills for Employability which is an SQA accredited award for volunteering activity (Fee, 2010; Scottish Qualifications Authority, 2010; Volunteer Development Scotland, 2010d). It would be informative to better understand employers' attitudes to volunteering in and of itself as well as accredited volunteering programmes. According to the Institute for Volunteering Research, there is "little research that explores the demand for accreditation and its impact on volunteers and on their opportunities for employment" (Ockenden, 2007).

3.5.5 *The implications for policy and practice*

The implication of volunteering being sold as a route to employability, through funded employability programmes and similar, is that it doesn't make clear the complexity of the relationship between the two. Volunteer experience can help individuals to feel more confident about entering the labour market, but equally a bad experience can put them off. In addition, it is clear from some research (Cordon and Sainsbury, 2005; Schugurensky et al., 2005) that volunteering in and of itself is not enough that volunteers feel they need something to show for their volunteering, such as a certificate.

Employers' attitudes towards volunteering might be different in the event that it formed part of a qualification. However, accreditation of volunteering has resource implications for volunteer-involvers, and can be off-putting to volunteers who have a primary motivation to help others (Danson and Cullen, 2002).

A review of student volunteering (National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement, 2009) suggests that the combination of a tightening labour market and a belief that volunteering can enhance employability might lead to increased demand for volunteering. This has implications for volunteer-involving organisations who may experience an influx of volunteers whose primary motivation is employment experience and are therefore seeking additional opportunities to learn and develop.

Similarly, if the state enforces volunteering as part of Welfare to Work agendas, (either directly or indirectly) then the pressure on volunteer-involving organisations to provide supported opportunities will increase. This has resource implications as well as wider ethical implications about the free-will nature of volunteering.

Volunteering being sold as a potential alternative to paid work for those who do not work may have the implication of preventing people from returning to the paid labour market: “a world that very often they have experienced to be competitive and hostile” (CEV, 2007, p.7). Furthermore, they join the Institute for Volunteering research in pointing out that volunteering must not be exploited as an ‘alternative employment measure’” (CEV, 2007; Ockenden and Hill, 2009).

Volunteering research looking at the relationship between volunteering and employability seems to work in a vacuum that ignores the complexity of the paid labour market. Where volunteering is viewed to have a role, this is based on the expectation that volunteer roles are suitable preparation for paid work, and that volunteering will be recognised as essential experience. However, the paid labour market is made up of a series of complex interactions between public policy, employer policies and competition. This has the implication that the relationship between volunteering (itself a complex phenomenon) and employability is misunderstood.

In relation to employer supported volunteering, it has the potential to significantly alter volunteering in its current form. As more employers come on board, potentially more people will become involved in volunteering which may displace existing volunteers such as those on Incapacity Benefit, or the low skilled if there is no subsequent increase in demand for volunteers. However, the formalisation of this volunteering as a work activity (included in PDP developments, carried out in work time, co-ordinated by the employer) has implications for individuals’ attitudes to community volunteering which they would do in their own time. Not enough is yet known about the relationship between one and the other. The related issue of employers making a private endeavour public might also have implications for how people feel about volunteering, described by Cremin (2010, p.137) as “the lifestyle, the identity, the politics and the passions of the subject as assets for competitive advantage”.

3.6 The Areas of Uncertainty

Research on volunteering, employability, and volunteering and employability is vast and covers a wide range of opinions on the concepts and the relationships between them. The research does not all point in one direction, with conflicting arguments and evidence making the relationships difficult to decipher. Fundamentally, the relationships between

the two concepts are messy, misunderstood and misrepresented. There are several areas of uncertainty arising from the literature which are worthy of further research consideration. These will be identified and discussed here, with reference to the relevant literature. The following section details the research questions that aim to improve understanding of the relationships between the key concepts.

The conceptual framework for this research is based on the Hillage and Pollard (1998) and McQuaid and Lindsay (2005) approaches to employability, as depicted in figures three and four respectively. These approaches extend beyond a narrow supply side view, and therefore support the scope of this research in considering both the supply and demand factors, as well as the individual and wider contextual factors.

3.6.1 *Volunteer-involving organisations*

The role of volunteer-involving organisations in providing volunteering and employability programmes is unclear (Lee, 2010a); that they choose to participate in employability programmes suggests that they view themselves as having a role to play (Ockenden and Hill, 2009; Volunteer Development Scotland, unpublished-a). However, *the motivations and drivers for this are unclear*, as is *whether they have the necessary experience and resources to prepare people for work*. This includes the provision of training (Hirst, 2000), ongoing support (Ockenden and Hill, 2009) and accreditation (Danson and Cullen, 2002), as well as the potential to support an increasing number of people seeking work-like experience (National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement, 2009). Some organisations recruit volunteers themselves at the end of employability programmes which potentially muddies the water around the effect of these programmes on *transferable skills* and abilities (Tomlinson, 2009; Lee, 2010a). It also *raises a question of whether these organisations are using volunteering as a test bed for new recruits* (Lee, 2010a).

3.6.2 *Volunteering and employability programmes*

Although employability as a concept is about much more than moving unemployed people into the labour market, the policy and research focus has been on the unemployed and their journey to work (see Lindsay, 2009; Lee, 2010a). *There is uncertainty in the literature about the length of this journey, the steps that assist the move into paid work and even whether employability has been achieved if someone is in a paid job* (Lindsay,

2009; Ockenden and Hill, 2009; Lee, 2010a). Specifically in relation to volunteering, *it is unclear what part it plays in assuring potential employers that someone is employable, and indeed, whether it is analogous to paid work, therefore providing necessary experience* (Gay, 1998; Lee, 2010a). Measuring the success of an employability intervention requires the journey of the volunteer to be taken into account, and clarity on *whether employability is defined as being in work, being in appropriate work, working in the organisation where they volunteered, or not working but feeling more employable as a result of volunteering* (Ockenden and Hill, 2009; Tomlinson, 2009; Lee, 2010a).

From the individual viewpoint, programme participants are rounded individuals who have experience beyond their volunteering. It is acknowledged in research that personal circumstances will impact on employability in addition to concrete experience (Hillage and Pollard, 1998; McQuaid and Lindsay, 2005). It is unclear *what role personal characteristics and circumstances play within volunteering and employability* (Hirst, 2000; Lee, 2010a). In particular, it is notable in research that volunteers over claim the impact of volunteering on their employability which is worthy of further consideration (Hirst, 2000).

In terms of the volunteering activity undertaken by volunteers to enhance their employability, it is unclear *whether particular types of volunteering within particular types of organisation have any more likelihood of increased success for labour market outcomes* (Hirst, 2000; Lee, 2010a). In addition, it is uncertain *what amount or intensity of volunteering makes a difference in improving employability, although the provision of training has been linked to positive outcomes* (Hirst, 2000).

3.6.3 Employers and volunteering

Due to the small number of studies investigating the attitudes of employers towards volunteering, there is a lot of ambiguity around the issue (Lee, 2010a). The studies suggest that attitudes towards volunteering vary across employers of different sizes, in different sectors and across different fields (Cook and Jackson, 2006; Gammon and Ellison, 2010). It is suggested that managers with personal experience of volunteering have a more positive attitude towards it than those who do not, but *there is little knowledge of how these views are reinforced by the labour market* (Cook and Jackson, 2006; Gammon and Ellison, 2010). The issue of volunteering in relation to qualifications

is also unclear, in particular *whether accredited volunteering is viewed as more valuable* (Cordon and Sainsbury, 2005; Cook and Jackson, 2006; Ockenden, 2007). In addition, some individual volunteers have reported that employers are not fully appreciative of the skills and experience gained through volunteering (Cook and Jackson, 2006; Lee, 2010a). The related issue of ESV adds a layer of complexity as employers try to encourage existing staff to become involved in their communities (Lukka, 2000; McBain and Machin, 2007), it is not clear *whether they seek new staff with a positive attitude towards this type of engagement, or whether they promote staff based on their volunteering experiences*.

3.7 The Gaps This Thesis Will Fill

The main aim of the research is to understand the roles and views of volunteer-involving organisations and employers in Scotland in relation to volunteering and employability.

The main research questions:

1. What is the role of volunteer-involving organisations as labour market intermediaries? (see 3.6.1)
2. What are the characteristics of volunteering and employability programmes delivered by volunteer-involving organisations? (see 3.6.2)
3. What are employers' views on volunteering in the labour market? (see 3.6.3)

The research questions and sub-questions:

1. What is the role of volunteer-involving organisations as labour market intermediaries?
 - a. What motivates volunteer-involvers to become involved in employability programmes?
 - b. How do volunteer-involvers see their role in the labour market?
 - c. How do volunteer-involvers relate to the labour market?
2. What are the characteristics of volunteering and employability programmes delivered by volunteer-involving organisations?

- a. How is employability defined and measured in employability programmes?
 - b. What does the journey to the labour market look like?
 - c. Is all volunteering equal in an employability context?
 - d. Are volunteer-involving organisations recruiting volunteers into jobs?
 - e. What is the impact of this agenda for volunteering?
3. What are employers' views on volunteering in the labour market?
- a. Do employers value volunteering experience?
 - b. Does volunteering experience convey skills in the labour market?
 - c. Does accreditation enhance volunteering?
 - d. Do volunteer-involving employers behave differently?
 - e. Do employers with personal experience of volunteering behave differently?
 - f. How does Employer Supported Volunteering relate to this?

The research fieldwork focused on two areas: the first being the employability programmes run by and co-ordinated through volunteer-involving organisations in Scotland, and the second being the attitudes of employers to volunteering. Examining both of these provides a rounded picture of 'supply and demand', e.g. what are employability programmes in the voluntary sector supplying in terms of volunteer skills and experiences, and how does this fit with the demand of employers?

The employability programmes are considered in relation to what they are offering, how they are funded, how they came about, what outcomes they are measuring and the drivers for this. The types of organisation they link with to provide employment opportunities are also considered.

Employers' attitudes to volunteering are considered in relation to their sector and field, whether they currently involve volunteers or have ESV programmes. Their attitudes to volunteering, the voluntary sector and employability are also captured. The relationship between volunteering and employability is examined in relation to both entering paid work and progressing within the paid labour market. Employers' attitudes towards accreditation of volunteering opportunities are also captured as is their attitude to

volunteering in relation to qualifications and other experiences, including paid work experience.

3.8 Summary and Conclusions

This chapter has reviewed the relevant literature to provide context to the research, covering volunteering, employment and employability. It has highlighted that the uptake of volunteering in Scotland and other Western countries is around one third of the population and has remained static for a number of years. It is important to note that the unemployed are much less likely to volunteer than their unemployed counterparts, which suggests that any programmes of volunteering for the unemployed may be their first experience of volunteering, and therefore will be important in shaping their future involvement.

Government policy on volunteering has been critiqued due to its supply-side focus, and the unquestioning belief of its impact on individuals and policy agendas. This belief appears to be the driving force for funding of volunteering and employability programmes. Beyond this, Government in Scotland provides support for volunteering by funding a third sector infrastructure that makes provision for volunteering provision at the local level. These local organisations perform a brokering role and support volunteer-involvers to recruit volunteers and improve practice relate to their involvement.

In the literature comparing paid and unpaid work, it is clear that volunteering is viewed as being a lesser activity than paid work, despite its potential as an alternative to work. Arguments are made in the literature that while in the volunteering market, organisations are expected to adapt in order to recruit, in the paid labour market the onus to adapt is on the individual. This has been interpreted by some as an admission that volunteer-involving organisations are so desperate for help that they will lower their standards to get people involved. This has important implications for how volunteering is viewed in relation to labour market preparation. In addition, the demographics of those excluded from volunteering echo the demographics of those excluded from the paid labour market.

United Kingdom Government policy on employment has been supply-side focused, tackling preparing individuals for work, but not increasing labour market demand. Funded programmes run by the Department for Work and Pensions, for example, have

shifted away from demanding hard job outcomes, but have still focused on the individual and not on the supply of either job or volunteering opportunities, with volunteer-involvers being left to find or create suitable placements.

Employers play an important role in controlling access to the labour market, and the literature suggests that attitudes to experience and qualifications are important factors. It is also suggested that recruitment practices can be exclusionary, for example, word-of-mouth recruitment can exclude those without working contacts. It is notable that this might benefit volunteers who may be in a position to be the first to hear of paid vacancies within organisations.

The rise of Employer Supported Volunteering programmes suggests that employer interest in volunteering is growing. Volunteering is viewed by employers as a way of improving staff skills and teamwork, as well as helping them link to local communities during work time. Nevertheless, feedback from staff suggests a sense of unease with the inclusion of volunteering in formal workplace procedures such as appraisals and PDP as volunteering is primarily viewed as a private endeavour.

From the small number of studies undertaken on employers' attitudes to volunteering, it is a complicated picture. There appears to be different attitudes from employers of different sizes, and from managers with or without volunteering experience. Volunteering is viewed by employers as a way of gaining skills and experience, but individual applicants report that employers don't always understand the skills gained. There is a sense that while volunteering is viewed positively, paid experience is preferred.

Employability policy is devolved to the Scottish Government and is delivered through a partnership approach. This approach is evident at both a national and local level, grounded in a view that each partner can offer specialist support as part of a menu of provision. The role of volunteer-involvers in these partnerships is worthy of consideration.

Literature on volunteering and employability demonstrates that volunteering is viewed as being 'analogous to paid work'. Several authors have found evidence to the contrary, suggesting that the roles undertaken are menial, without responsibility, and do not relate to labour market demand. Research demonstrating positive labour market outcomes has

found that the majority of volunteers finding work have found it in the organisation where they were a volunteer, or in a related organisation. This raises questions about the transferability of skills, the roles of networks, and the recruitment processes.

Where the impact of volunteering is strong in the literature is in relation to the building of self-esteem, networking, and routes to other opportunities. Related to this is the confidence to apply for paid employment, reinforcing the view that the journey to paid work can take time. The issue of timescales arises regularly in the literature, particularly with regard to measuring outcomes of programmes of support, while taking into account the impact of personal characteristics and other factors.

The following chapter introduces the methodology for the research, which will help answer the research questions raised. This chapter will detail the research philosophy, research design and research process.

Chapter 4 – Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter details the research philosophy and methodology employed to answer the research questions raised from the literature review. In turn it deals with:

- The philosophical perspective
- The qualitative approach
- The research design
- The research process

The research methodology chosen to answer the research questions takes lessons from existing research in the field. As such the design attempts to suitably match up the subject of study, the skills and knowledge of the researcher and research traditions (Cresswell, 2009).

4.2 Philosophical Perspective

The philosophical perspective chosen for the research is that of critical realism. Critical realism is founded on the beliefs that the natural and social sciences can apply similar approaches to data collection and explanation, and that there is an external reality that can be studied (Bryman, 2008). Developing this argument on the existence of external reality, Easton (2010) contends that there are three levels of reality: the real world, events in the real world, and empirical events that we can capture. Critical realists typically investigate behaviours or people and systems, although Easton (2010) suggests that the majority of research undertaken from this philosophical perspective captures reports of these rather than direct observations.

In his introductory text on the philosophy underpinning critical realism, Bhaskar (1989) argued that researchers can only understand and change the social world if they can identify the structures that underpin events and dialogues. Drawing on this argument, Bryman (2008, p.590) suggests that the application of the critical realist perspective to social research implies that “access to the social world is always mediated and thus subjective”. This explanation is also used by Saunders (2007) in his account of the ontology of critical realism, as he concludes that although reality is objective, it is

interpreted through social means, thereby becoming subjective through the process of analysis.

This research is positioned within the critical realist philosophy as it aims to understand the relationship between volunteering and employability within the context of the social structures of volunteer involvement and of the paid labour market. According to Saunders (2007, p.115) critical realists “recognise the importance of multi-level study”, specifically taking into account individuals, groups and organisations. This research aims to understand how volunteering relates to employability within different types of organisations, placing context in a central role. As the unpaid and paid labour markets interact, this research takes these interactions into account, in line with Saunders (2007) argument that the existence of a variety of structures, procedures and processes increases the likelihood of interaction between them. Therefore, organisations, and the structures, procedures and processes therein, are a key focus of this research.

When studying organisations, context is vital, as the boundaries between the phenomenon being studied and the context can be unclear (Yin, 2009). According to Easton, a critical realist case study approach is suited to researching organisations: “a critical realist case approach is particularly well suited to relatively clearly bounded but complex phenomena such as organisations, inter-organisational relationships or nets of connected organisations” (Easton, 2010, p.123). Therefore, in order to capture the important contextual information, as well as the organisational information, this research makes use of a case study approach.

The data collection methods chosen in a critical realist study can be quantitative or qualitative but “must fit the subject matter” (Saunders et al., 2007, p.119). This research primarily employs qualitative methods, with quantitative methods used for pre-interview surveys. As such, critical realism is a suitable philosophical perspective for both the subject, and chosen methods of this research.

4.3 Qualitative Approach

As described in the previous chapter, data is collected on formal volunteering participation in Scotland through the Scottish Household Survey (Scottish Government, 2013c), with supplementary data collected on activities undertaken and time given. This

type of quantitative trend data on volunteering has been criticised for lacking context, with the suggestion made that it is only useful in the context of a wider understanding of why volunteer participation is changing, and what impact volunteers are having (Evans and Saxton, 2005). Research on volunteering beyond large-scale quantitative surveys is typically small-scale in nature, but has been accused of not being critical enough (Taylor, 2005; Lee, 2010a).

Research on volunteering and employability has been undertaken using different methodologies, from a qualitative (Cook and Jackson, 2006; Lee, 2010a), quantitative (Ellis Paine et al., 2013) or mixed methods approach (Hirst, 2000). Qualitative research has been small scale in nature, focusing on individual stories and examples (Cook and Jackson, 2006; Lee, 2010a), while quantitative research has drawn on large datasets, such as the British Household Panel Survey to examine and explain trends (Ellis Paine et al., 2013).

The mixed methods approach taken by Hirst (2000) transcended the quantitative and qualitative divide by using a combination of regression analysis of hard data on Job Seekers Allowance claims, and qualitative interviewing on the volunteer experience. This approach allowed the author to contrast statistical data on return to work with qualitative findings on how job seekers felt about their volunteering. This uncovered a complex relationship between the two concepts, in particular the lack of alignment between the statistical job outcomes of the unemployed, and the reported benefits of individuals. Individuals over-reported the benefits of volunteering, and the research found that those who volunteered while unemployed took longer to re-enter the labour market than those who did not volunteer. Having been commissioned by the Department for Education and Skills, the research had access to both individuals and data, in order to use the mixed methods approach. Beyond Government commissioned research, this level of access may be problematic.

There are no quantitative data sets available on the subject under study, beyond data at the level of the individual such as the British Household Panel Survey (Ellis Paine et al., 2013). Research on volunteering and employability has mainly taken its focus on the individual experience, to the degree that a lot is known about the reported benefits of volunteering for employability (Gay, 1998; Hirst, 2000; Cordon and Sainsbury, 2005; Schugurensky et al., 2005; Lee, 2010a; Rothwell and Charleston, 2013). Evidence of the

impact of volunteering on employability is typically self-reported and somewhat anecdotal. Little account has been taken of either the role of volunteer-involving organisations in helping people become employable, or the views of employers in the labour market. Referring back to the McQuaid and Lindsay framework in chapter two, this effectively means that research effort on employability relating to volunteering has been focused on “individual factors” to the detriment of “external factors” such as labour market demand and enabling support. As such, there is no contextual information provided to support the view that volunteering specifically was instrumental in aiding access to the paid labour market.

In his research on the experience of incapacity benefits recipients, Lee (2010a) suggests that the role of volunteer-involvers in employability is not a simple or unproblematic one, and that many organisations are not offering volunteering roles that translate to the paid labour market. The employability agenda may be problematic for organisations who are trying to offer a service, or meet aims, as they may view volunteering as a means of delivering their service, or meeting their aims, rather than viewing volunteers as a group of people to be helped to prepare for work. Although good practice in volunteers’ management states that volunteers should have access to training and support, there is no impetus on volunteer-involvers to provide employment preparation for volunteers. This research aims to better understand the role of volunteer-involvers in employability work, answering the questions raised by Lee (2010a) regarding their roles as labour market intermediaries, and how this manifests itself within a wider field of employability provision.

From another angle on the volunteering and employability question, Lee (2010a) raises the question of the role of employers. Some of his research participants reported that some employers were uninterested in their volunteering experience, and simply wanted to know about paid work experience. However, others reported success in the labour market that they felt was a direct result of their volunteering experience. This mixed message suggests that attention ought to be given to employers’ attitudes towards volunteering as employers are gatekeepers to the labour market. This research aims to better understand the views of employers in relation to volunteering and the labour market, answering the questions raised by Lee (2010a) regarding the ways that volunteering is treated within the labour market.

As this research focused on the experiences and attitudes of organisations, a qualitative approach was chosen in order to allow for personal experiences and viewpoints to be captured. Qualitative research is criticised for not being generalisable to a wider population, being difficult to replicate, and being too subjective (Bryman, 2008); however, it has something to offer to the subject at hand. Even though the research can be comfortably placed under the qualitative ‘umbrella’, there is a great deal of breadth and depth to what this might entail, and little agreement about what a qualitative approach might look like (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). Generally accepted definitions of the qualitative approach typically include: understanding the social world, small carefully chosen samples, close researcher contact, rich data, and emergent analysis (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003, p.4). The concepts of volunteering and employability and their place in the social world require to be understood in order to better appreciate the relationship between them. A small scale study, with close researcher contact and a richness of gathered data lent itself well to the research topic.

4.4 Research Design

4.4.1 *Selection of method*

Easton (2010) argues that critical realism is particularly suited to case study research. Case studies are considered to be most applicable to research that deals with questions of “how” and “why” as they allow for explanation. A constraint of case studies is their low statistical representativeness (Easton, 2010), and carrying out an increased number of cases does not improve this.

In the early planning stages of the research, it was considered that a case study approach would be suitable for both elements of the research. However, after initial pilot interviews with employers, it became apparent that the level of breadth and depth of information required for a case study may be lacking, particularly when the findings were based on fieldwork with one participant, supplemented with additional information that they were able and willing to provide.

Conversely, the pilot interviews with volunteer-involving organisations showed that there was a need for multiple interviews as employability programmes typically had management and core staff input, and so it was important to capture different views on the organisation’s role as well as the experiences of the staff. In addition, the buy in from

the volunteer-involvers into the research was better, as they could see the benefit to their organisation in participating, therefore making it easier to secure better access. By comparison, employers were keen that I interviewed one representative of their organisation (and in most cases only one person dealt with the matter at hand), which did not provide the depth needed for a case study (Yin, 2009).

Regarding the selection of participants, the research employed a spatially targeted convenience sample for both elements of the research. This primarily took account of the importance of geography to both paid and unpaid labour markets, with the local authority area being the location reference. Other characteristics of participant organisations were used to ensure balance in ongoing participant selection (Stake, 1995), for example the project focus, and funding sources of volunteer-involvers, and the sector and size of employers.

As a result of the learning from the pilot study, a case study strategy was employed to explore the issues and their situational determinants within volunteer-involving organisations, and an interview strategy was used with employers. A case study “looks in depth at one, or a small number of, organizations, events, or individuals, usually over time” (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008, p.97).

As the first part of the research focussed on volunteer-involving organisations in relation to the provision of employability programmes, this method was suitable. It is said that users of multiple cases “usually fit with either a relativist or positivist epistemology” (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008, p.97), however, this study takes a multiple case approach from an realist viewpoint, building on the work of Stake (1995), who argues that multiple cases allow us to maximise what we can learn while understanding the lived experiences of others. This viewpoint is less concerned about statistical validity and the ability to generalise, and more concerned with the richness of data. Yin (2009) answers critiques of the case study approach by noting the importance of the researcher defining their study carefully before going out into the field to guard against “huge piles of data, which allow researchers to make any interpretations they want” (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008, p.97). Within the cases, the research made use of interviews and documentation review techniques (Saunders et al., 2007).

Qualitative interviewing can be described in different ways: as a craft, as a social production of knowledge, or as a social practice (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). A key identifying feature of the interview technique is that it relies heavily on researcher ability: to produce quality data, to create discourse with the interviewee and to consider ethical and power implications. The researcher is the “main instrument for obtaining knowledge” (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009, p.74). The researcher is in a powerful position in relation to the interviewee which has to be acknowledged and accounted for.

The interviews were open ended and took the form of a ‘guided conversation’ which Yin (2009, p.106) describes as having a consistent line of enquiry within which a fluid set of questions can be covered. Yin describes this as using level one and level two questions, where level two is your research questions or objectives, and level one is the questions you actually ask in the field. The level one questions must answer both the level one *and* level two questions. This requires skill on the part of the interviewer, who has to ask questions that are acceptable to and understood by the interviewee in order to answer both sets of questions, however, this might be viewed as a form of “manipulative dialogue” if there is a hidden agenda (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009, p.33). In order to avoid this, research participants were provided with full information about the research study at the point of recruitment to the study, including the research questions, and once interviewed, were provided with the transcript of their interview for review and approval.

The interviews with volunteer-involving organisations delivering employability programmes focused on their understanding of employability and how it related to volunteering, while the interviews with employers focused on their understanding of volunteering and how it related to employability. The objective of the volunteer-involving organisation interviews was to review the funding, structure and rationale of programmes of volunteering for employability, in particular unpicking the assumptions behind them in order to compare them with the data from employers. The objective of interviews with employers was to understand their knowledge and experience of volunteering, whether it forms part of their recruitment, retention and promotion strategies and whether they feel it enhances employability in job candidates. The questions used in the field are in Appendices A and B.

The overarching line of enquiry was guided by the research questions, but the questioning and flow of conversation was loose to allow the interviewees to give their views on

volunteering (employers) and employability (volunteer-involvers) from their own contexts. It was important to understand individual's views of volunteering early in the interview process, including what they feel it includes and doesn't include, what activities it involves, and who might get involved. This gave context to the interview data.

The documentation review involved the gathering of documentary secondary data in the form of written materials (Saunders et al., 2007) which were requested from organisations prior to undertaking the interviews. The documents included recruitment, retention and promotion policies, standard job applications and specifications, volunteering policies and general company information such as annual reports. This allowed for information to be reviewed prior to interview in order to prepare for the interviews, potentially minimising the time taken at interview, and to allow discussion of the formation and implementation of the above. It also provided a means of triangulating the information gathered from interviews.

4.4.2 *Pilot study*

Once the methodology had been initially designed, it was decided to undertake a pilot study in order to test out the methods and techniques to be employed. These participants were aware that they were participating in a pilot and agreed to be subject to additional questioning about understanding of the questions and the topics covered. The data from the pilot studies was used to shape the study, as well as being included in the final analysis.

The main finding from the pilot study was that the interviews went on in excess of two hours. This was tiring for both the participants and the researcher, and would have been difficult to maintain into the main fieldwork, particularly as the intention was to fully transcribe each interview for analysis. There was also some repetition within the question set. Feedback from participants demonstrated that some questions could be better explained. For example, the question asked of employers regarding the difference between volunteering and paid work led them to focus solely on remuneration, and further information on motivation and commitment had to be probed.

For the final interview schedule, the question was reworded in order for the interviewee to think about reasons beyond pay by acknowledging it as the key difference. In order to

allow employer respondents to answer attitudinal questions more quickly and easily, allowing them to focus more on in-depth questions on practice, it was decided to introduce the online survey as a precursor to the interview to capture employer attitudes through a series of Likert scale questions that would be quick to work through, meaning that interview time could be spent probing and discussing rather than covering basic ground. The online survey questions can be found in Appendix C.

4.4.3 *Selection of volunteer-involving organisations as cases*

Stake (1995, p.4) notes the compulsion of researchers to try to select initial cases which are in some way “typical or representative of other cases”. He advises that a small number of cases is unlikely to be representative of the wider population and that it is important to be mindful that “case study research is not sampling research”. He argues that the primary concern should be in maximising what can be learned from cases, while being cognisant of the need to consider the contexts and uniqueness of the cases that are included and excluded. His working example is that of selecting schools in Chicago with which to undertake research into school achievement. Having mapped out over eighty characteristics upon which a sample could be chosen, his research team decided to start “the other way around” (Stake, 1995, p.6) and to select cases which were known to be interesting and accessible. As schools were selected, their characteristics were noted, and attempts made to ensure that further selections were balanced. He concludes that although they could not claim to have ensured representation of all Chicago schools, they could claim to have chosen a range of experiences that should result in learning: “balance and variety are important; opportunity to learn is of primary importance” (Stake, 1995, p.6). He makes the point that not all cases will work out, and that it is necessary to review progress in order to know when to change selection if necessary.

There is no collated information available on which organisations offer volunteering and employability programmes, and the population of this study could have potentially run to thousands of organisations across Scotland. As such, the same problems of sampling criteria and generalisation experienced by Stake may have arisen. Therefore the same strategy employed by Stake (1995), as described in the paragraph above, was used for case selection. In order to ensure quality of data and learning, cases were drawn initially from organisations that were known to be involved in volunteering and employability and were willing to participate. Due to the need to take account of different local labour

markets and the partnership approaches being undertaken to employability, the cases were chosen in relation to the local authority areas in which they were situated, effectively a spatially targeted convenience sample. The cases therefore provide a range of experiences that should result in learning, rather than being representative.

A total of six case studies were undertaken to provide a mix of geography, funding and activities: two were Scotland-wide programmes, two worked across two neighbouring local authorities, and the remaining two covered one local authority area each, one mainly rural and one mainly urban. In order to preserve anonymity for participants, who have revealed funding information, as well as personal opinions, the information provided has been separated from the geographical locations of the cases. The following section details economic data on the geographical locations of the cases. Figure eight below shows the characteristics of the case studies:

Case	Focus	Funding	Fieldwork
1	Mentoring and coaching	Local Authority European Social Fund The Big Lottery	Two visits to main office facility, introduced to staff and shown volunteering opportunities that are available to clients
2	Accreditation of volunteering	Scottish Government	Visit to main office facility, demonstration of online programme
3	First steps into volunteering	Job Centre Plus European Social Fund	Two visits to main office facility, met chief officer and volunteers, toured volunteer-led café facility
4	Volunteering as preparation for work	Department for Work and Pensions	Visit to main office facility, and visit to local office facility in West of Scotland
5	Life Skills	Local Authority Health Board Private Sector	Visit to main office facility, and life skills centre, met other staff and volunteers, saw demonstration of practical activities undertaken by volunteers
6	Social Capital Enhancement	Department for Work and Pensions	Visit to main office facility, met volunteers and clients

Figure 8: The characteristics of the case studies

In order to provide context to the cases, figure nine provides a summary of labour market statistics on the case study locations. Note that cases three and six are in two locations, which have been labelled 3A, 3B, 6A, and 6B for clarity as data is provided for both locations. Cases two and four are both Scotland-wide and so the data is the same. Data is based on Office for National Statistics Labour Market profiles and Local Area Labour Market in Scotland data (Office of National Statistics, 2011c; d; e; f; b; a; Scottish Government, 2013a; b):

Case	1	2	4	3A	3B	5	6A	6B
Resident Population¹								
Resident Population	495,400	5,254,800		89,900	170,700	110,600	90,800	50,800
Population aged 16-64 (% of total population)	351,800 (71%)	3,449,100 (65.6%)		55,900 (62.2%)	111,600 (65.4%)	68,400 (61.8%)	58,900 (64.9%)	38,000 (65%)
Labour Supply								
Economically Active Population ² (% of total population)	274,200 (77.3%)	2,724,000 (77.8%)		43,700 (76.8%)	88,300 (78.6%)	55,000 (79.1%)	43,000 (73.9%)	24,000 (73.4%)
Economically Inactive Population ³ (% of total population)	79,300 (22.7%)	784,900 (23.1%)		12,700 (23.2%)	23,600 (21.4%)	14,100 (20.9%)	14,800 (26.1%)	8,600 (26.6%)
No. of Economically Inactive Population who want a job ⁴ (% of economically inactive population)	11,300 (14.2%)	199,400 (25.4%)		2,700 (21.2%)	6,200 (26.1%)	3,400 (24.2%)	3,600 (24%)	1,900 (21.9%)
Population with no qualifications ⁵ (% of population aged 16-64)	19,100 (5.5%)	361,000 (10.7%)		4,000 (7.3%)	11,100 (10%)	7,600 (11.3%)	5,700 (10%)	3,400 (10.4%)
Gross Weekly Earnings by Residence ⁶	£537.50	£498.30		£593.40	£507.10	£473.10	£550.30	£459.20
Gross Hourly Earnings by Residence ⁷	£14.13	£12.67		£15.35	£13.20	£12.00	£13.54	£11.85

¹ Population 2011, based on ONS mid-year population estimates

² 2012, based on ONS Annual Population Survey

³ 2012, based on ONS Annual Population Survey

⁴ 2012, based on ONS Annual Population Survey

⁵ 2012, based on ONS Annual Population Survey

⁶ 2012, based on ONS Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings resident analysis (based on full-time workers)

⁷ 2012, based on ONS Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings resident analysis (based on full-time workers)

Case	1	2	4	3A	3B	5	6A	6B
Out-Of-Work Benefits								
JSA Claimants ⁸ (% of population aged 16-64)	10,940 (3.1%)	134,410 (4.8%)		1,260 (2.3%)	5,342 (4.8%)	2,015 (2.9%)	1,701 (2.9%)	1,681 (5.1%)
JSA Claimants aged 18-24 ⁹ (% of resident population aged 18-24)	2,385 (4%)	34,745 (6.9%)		380 (5%)	1,325 (8.6%)	570 (6.8%)	465 (4.1%)	495 (11%)
Labour Demand								
Job Density ¹⁰	0.94	0.77		0.41	0.71	0.63	0.78	0.48
Gross Weekly Earnings by Workplace ¹¹	£536.80	£497.60		£398.60	£532.40	£437.00	£551.60	£460.00
Gross Hourly Earnings by Workplace ¹²	£14.17	£12.63		£9.72	£13.41	£10.80	£15.12	£12.50
Underemployment								
Underemployment as % of economically active ¹³	8.6%	10%		10.6%	12.2%	11.6%	9.3%	10.3%

Figure 9: Labour market statistics on the case study areas

⁸ May 2013, ONS Claimant Count

⁹ May 2013, ONS Claimant Count

¹⁰ 2011, based on ONS Job Density

¹¹ 2012, based on ONS Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings workplace analysis (based on full-time workers)

¹² 2012, based on ONS Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings workplace analysis (based on full-time workers)

¹³ 2012, based on ONS Annual Population Survey

4.4.3.1 Case study area 1

While figure nine above provides statistical detail on the labour market statistics of this area, there are some details in the table that are worthy of note about this area to give it some context. Of the case study areas, this area has the highest proportion of the population of working age (16-64). Although the levels of the population who are economically active and economically inactive are similar to the national average, the number of economically inactive citizens who want a job is the lowest of all the case study areas at 14.2%. The area also has the lowest proportion of citizens without qualifications. The number claiming Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) is lower than the national average, and the area has the lowest proportion of JSA claimants aged 18-24, suggesting that it has the lowest level of youth unemployment of the case study areas. Gross earnings on both a weekly and hourly basis are higher than the national average. The job density of the area is the highest of the case study areas at 0.94 which means that there is almost one job available for every working age adult. Just under 9% of the population describe themselves as underemployed.

Data from the Annual Population Survey 2012 on Local Authority labour markets (Scottish Government, 2013b) shows that the four most common sectors of employment are: public administration, education and health; banking, finance and insurance; and distribution, hotels and restaurants. Data from the Office of National Statistics (Office of National Statistics, 2011d) shows that 56.1% of the working age population are educated to NVQ Level 4 or higher.

In relation to volunteering, according to the Scottish Household Survey from 2009/10 (the most recently available data at Scottish Local Authority level), 32% of the population were involved in giving unpaid help to organisations or groups in the previous twelve months (Scottish Government, 2011a).

4.4.3.2 Case study areas 2 and 4

As these cases studies form part of a Scotland-wide programme, the data in figure nine associated with these cases is based on the whole of Scotland, and therefore forms the national average that is used to draw comparisons with the other case study areas. That said, it is notable that a quarter of those who are economically inactive want a job, that over ten percent of the population have no qualifications, and that job density is 0.77,

meaning that there is less than one job available for each working age adult. The level of underemployment is 10%.

Data from the Annual Population Survey 2012, on Local Authority labour markets (Scottish Government, 2013b) shows that the four most common sectors of employment are: public administration, education and health; distribution, hotels and restaurants; banking, finance and insurance; and manufacturing. Data from the Office of National Statistics (Office of National Statistics, 2011e) shows that 38.5% of the working age population are educated to NVQ Level 4 or higher.

In relation to volunteering, according to the Scottish Household Survey from 2009/10 (in order to make it comparable with the most recently available data at Scottish Local Authority level), 30% of the population were involved in giving unpaid help to organisations or groups in the previous twelve months (Scottish Government, 2011a).

4.4.3.3 Case study area 3

Although figure nine above provides statistical detail on the labour market statistics of the two areas that the case study operates within, there are some details in the table that are worthy of note about these areas to give it some context. Firstly, it is notable that the population of Area A within the case study is almost double that of Area B. However, the proportions of the population who are economically active and economically inactive respectively are not dissimilar. In Area A, there is a larger proportion of those economically inactive who want a job, and the number without qualifications is higher. The weekly and hourly wages by residence are higher in Area B than in Area A; however, this situation reverses when weekly and hourly wages by workplace are considered.

According to research carried out on Area A, the wage difference for those resident in the area, compared to those working in the area, is due to the large proportion of higher paid amongst local residents who work in a larger, neighbouring local authority area (Barr, 2011a). Job density in Area B is more favourable at 0.71, compared to 0.41 in Area A. Underemployment is higher than the national average in both areas.

Data from the Annual Population Survey 2012, on Local Authority labour markets (Scottish Government, 2013b) shows that the four most common sectors of employment in Area A are: public administration, education and health; distribution, hotels and

restaurants; banking, finance and insurance; and manufacturing, while in Area B the top three are the same, but transport and communications is the fourth.

Data from the Office of National Statistics (Office of National Statistics, 2011d) shows that 49.3% (Area A) and 41.6% (Area B) of the working age population are educated to NVQ Level 4 or higher.

In relation to volunteering, according to the Scottish Household Survey from 2009/10 (the most recently available data at Scottish Local Authority level), 39% (Area A) and 19% (Area B) of the respective populations were involved in giving unpaid help to organisations or groups in the previous twelve months (Scottish Government, 2011a).

4.4.3.4 Case study area 5

While the figure above provides statistical detail on the labour market statistics of this area, there are some details in the table that are worthy of note about this area to give it some context. Of the case study areas, this has the lowest proportion of the population of working age (16-64). Although the level of the population who are economically active is the highest of all the case study areas, the area also has the highest proportion of citizens without qualifications. Both the gross weekly and gross hourly earnings are lower than the national average. The job density of the area is 0.63 which means that there is almost two working age adults to every one job available. Almost 12% of the population are defined as underemployed.

Data from the Annual Population Survey 2012, on Local Authority labour markets (Scottish Government, 2013b) shows that the four most common sectors of employment are: public administration, education and health; distribution, hotels and restaurants; banking, finance and insurance; and manufacturing. Data from the Office of National Statistics (Office of National Statistics, 2011a) shows that 36.6% of the working age population are educated to NVQ Level 4 or higher.

In relation to volunteering, according to the Scottish Household Survey from 2009/10 (the most recently available data at Scottish Local Authority level), 32% of the population were involved in giving unpaid help to organisations or groups in the previous twelve months (Scottish Government, 2011a).

4.4.3.5 Case study area 6

Although the figure above provides statistical detail on the labour market statistics of the two areas that the case study operates within, there are some details in the table that are worthy of note about these areas to give it some context. It is notable that the two areas have similar levels of economic activity, although for both, levels of economic inactivity are higher than the national average. Earnings in Area A are higher than the national average, while earnings in Area B are lower. The number of Job Seekers Allowance claimants is lower than the national average for both adults and young people in Area A, and higher than the national average for both adults and young people in Area B. Job density in Area A is more favourable at 0.78, compared to 0.48 in Area B. Underemployment is around the national average in both areas.

Data from the Annual Population Survey 2012, on Local Authority labour markets (Scottish Government, 2013b) shows that the four most common sectors of employment in both Area A and Area B are: public administration, education and health; distribution, hotels and restaurants; banking, finance and insurance; and manufacturing.

Data from the Office of National Statistics (Office of National Statistics, 2011f; b) show that 38.7% (Area A) and 37.1% (Area B) of the working age population are educated to NVQ Level 4 or higher.

In relation to volunteering, according to the Scottish Household Survey from 2009/10 (the most recently available data at Scottish Local Authority level), 30% (Area A) and 33% (Area B) of the respective populations were involved in giving unpaid help to organisations or groups in the previous twelve months (Scottish Government, 2011a).

4.4.4 Selection of employers as interviewees

Similarly to the selection of cases, the potential pool of employers could have run into thousands, therefore convenience sampling was used to access interviewees (Saunders et al., 2007). The aim was to interview a mix of employers of different sizes, geographical locations and sectors. Due to interest in volunteering, it was sought to have a balance of organisations with exposure to volunteering, e.g. those who directly involved volunteers, those who supported staff to volunteer, and those who had no relationship with volunteering.

Recruitment of employers was carried out through a number of routes. Approaches were made to organisations directly and the online survey was circulated and used as a recruitment mechanism for in-depth interviews. The final question in the survey asked respondents to leave contact details if they were happy to take part in an in-depth interview. The survey was distributed through the researcher's personal contacts, the West of Scotland CIPD network, the personal contacts of colleagues and peers, as well as being snowballed through early participants. As the research was opt-in, and the survey forwarded on outwith the researcher's control, there is no reportable response rate and there was less control over the characteristics of those taking part. However, a total of twenty-five employers participated in the survey, and a spread of participants was gained in relation to size and sector of organisations, as seen in figure ten below.

	Small (<50 staff)	Medium (50-249 staff)	Large (250+ staff)
Voluntary Sector	3	1	0
Public Sector	0	1	6
Private Sector	1	3	10

Figure 10: Characteristics of survey respondents' organisations

Similar to the case study recruitment, interview participants were initially contacted via email or telephone and asked to participate. After initial agreement, a conversation was had with the participants regarding who would be best to speak to within the organisation in order to gather the information needed. A total of ten employers agreed to be interviewed. In all cases, one person was interviewed, and supplementary information collected where possible in order to triangulate the information given.

The characteristics of those interviewed were generally representative of the characteristics of those who completed the survey. The majority of participants were in dedicated HR roles, but in smaller organisations participants were in management roles that were wider than HR. The figure below shows the characteristics of the ten interviewees and organisations:

Employer	Sector	Size of org.	Volunteer-involver?	Staff volunteering policy?	Interviewee	Personal volunteering experience?
AA	Voluntary	Small	Yes	No	Chief Exec	Previous
BB	Public	Large	Yes	Yes	Manager	Previous
CC	Voluntary	Small	Yes	No	Director	Previous
DD	Public	Large	Yes	No	HR	None
EE	Private	Large	No	Yes	HR	None
FF	Private	Large	No	Yes	Manager	Current
HH	Public	Large	Yes	No	HR	Previous
II	Private	Large	No	No	HR	Current
JJ	Voluntary	Small	Yes	No	Manager	Previous
KK	Private	Medium	No	No	HR	Previous

Figure 11: The characteristics of employers

Employer AA is a voluntary organisation based within one local authority area in the West of Scotland. The organisation has twelve paid staff. New jobs are created through successful funding applications for fixed-term roles with extension subject to further funding. The organisation has a flat structure, so opportunities for internal promotion are rare.

The organisation involves volunteers on an ad-hoc basis, usually in response to requests from individuals to gain experience in their area of work. The organisation has a voluntary board of directors. There is no staff volunteering policy although staff do volunteer in their own time, and spend one day per year volunteering as a team during work time. This is not compulsory but everyone participates.

The interviewee was the organisations chief executive with responsibility for all staff recruitment and management and the management of any volunteers, interns or work placements.

Employer BB is a public sector organisation based within one local authority area in the West of Scotland. The organisation has around seventeen hundred paid staff. The organisation regularly recruits for jobs across all areas of operations, and annually recruits modern apprentices and short-term work placements. The organisation involves volunteers in governance at both local and organisational levels. The organisation implemented a staff volunteering policy in 2010 which allows for both individual and team volunteering during work time.

The interviewee was a senior manager with responsibility for employability programmes, including recruiting school leavers, modern apprentices, and other staff. They also hold responsibility for working with third sector partners, and funding these partners to deliver services and create job and placement opportunities for people in the local areas where they operate.

Employer CC is a social enterprise based within a local authority area in central Scotland. The organisation has four paid staff. The organisation involves volunteers in its work, and is reliant on volunteers to deliver core services. The organisation has recruited volunteers within the organisation to paid jobs on the basis that they have shown commitment. There is no staff volunteering policy although staff give time to the

organisation over and above their contracted hours. The organisation has a voluntary board of directors.

The interviewee was a director with responsibility for all staff recruitment and the management of volunteers.

Employer DD is a public sector organisation physically based in one local authority area in central Scotland but offering services to the whole of Scotland. They have six hundred and fifty paid staff. They have a volunteering strategy and involve around twenty volunteers in their work, and have plans to increase this through the creation of new volunteering roles and links to the local voluntary sector. They have Investing in Volunteers (iV) (Volunteering England, 2013) accreditation which means they have achieved a recognised standard in the way they manage volunteers.

The interviewee was a member of HR staff with responsibility for recruiting staff at all levels of the organisation.

Employer EE is a retail business based in the United Kingdom and Ireland and operating across Scotland. The organisation has in the region of twenty-two thousand paid staff across the UK and does not involve volunteers. Due to the nature of the business they recruit additional staff for Christmas. The organisation selects a partner charity every two years and sets targets to fundraise for that charity. Staff are encouraged to get involved in fundraising during and outwith work time. The organisation introduced a staff volunteering policy in 2011, and staff can use this to volunteer with the partner charity, or another organisation of their choice, as long as time off to volunteer aligns with the needs of the business.

The interviewee was a senior member of HR staff with responsibility for recruiting senior staff, and responsibility for supporting the recruitment of junior staff.

Employer FF is a private sector organisation based in three local authority areas of Scotland but offering services to the whole of Scotland. The organisation has ten thousand staff across the UK, and over six hundred and fifty based in Scotland. The organisation does not involve volunteers but has a staff volunteering policy. They regularly offer paid work placements to students and graduates.

The interviewee was a senior manager with responsibility for recruiting members of staff at all levels of the organisation, and developing staff learning and development across the company.

Employer GG was unable to complete the interview part of the research, and so was replaced by employer KK.

Employer HH is a public sector organisation physically located in and serving several local authority areas in the West of Scotland. The organisation has in the region of thirty-eight thousand paid staff. The organisation involves over two thousand volunteers in the delivery of its work, including volunteers from partner voluntary organisations who work on its sites. There is no staff volunteering policy.

The interviewee was a member of HR staff with responsibility for supporting recruitment of staff at all levels of the organisation, and special responsibility for Army Reservists within the organisation.

Employer II is a private sector organisation based in one local authority area in the North of Scotland. They have two and a half thousand paid employees. They do not involve volunteers in their work, but do offer paid and unpaid internships to those seeking experience, typically those leaving education. While the organisation does not support staff to volunteer, it provides financial support to charitable events locally.

The interviewee was a member of HR staff responsible for recruiting staff at all levels of the organisation.

Employer JJ is a voluntary organisation covering the whole of Scotland but physically based in one local authority area in the East of Scotland. The organisation has eleven paid staff. They involve volunteers in the delivery of services, and all volunteers are students or professionals in their field of work. There are over three hundred volunteers on their books who can be called on to help with activities as they arise. They have Investing in Volunteers (iV) (Volunteering England, 2013) accreditation which means they have achieved a recognised standard in the way they manage volunteers.

The interviewee was a manager within the organisation, with shared responsibility for the recruitment and management of staff, and sole responsibility for the recruitment and management of volunteers and interns.

Employer KK is a private sector organisation with its head office based in the West of Scotland, providing back-office and recruitment support to sister organisations based on sites in two Scottish local authority areas, and several locations in England. There are one hundred and fifty-two staff employed in the organisation in Scotland. The organisation does not involve volunteers, but has, in response to individual requests, allowed people to undertake unpaid placements in order to gain experience. Senior roles in the organisation are typically headhunted because of the nature of the work, but they recruit continuously for junior roles.

The interviewee was a member of HR staff with responsibility for recruiting staff for junior roles in the organisation.

4.5 The Research Process

4.5.1 *Ethics and informed consent*

In initial contact with the participants in both parts of the fieldwork, the most suitable person(s) for interview was sought. Thereafter, participant information and a research protocol (see Appendix D) were provided to each participant in order that they could give informed written consent to taking part in the research. This information included a description of the study, and contact details for both the researcher and the primary supervisor. The research had ethical approval from the University prior to commencement of fieldwork.

Participants were assured that their participation was voluntary and that they would not be penalised in any way if they refused to participate or receive benefits if they did participate. It was made clear that participants were allowed to pull out at any time, or to not answer any questions that they were uncomfortable with. All participants were given assurances about the extent to which anonymity could be preserved in the write up of the report. No information would be passed to a third party and all data collected was securely stored and only the researcher and supervisory team had access to the raw data. Permission to record interviews was sought and participants were able to review the

transcripts prior to the data being used, allowing for collaboration in the research project. In the events that recording was not permitted or not possible, detailed notes were taken and transcribed as soon as possible thereafter, and these were provided to participants for approval before use. Not all participants took up the opportunity to feedback on the transcriptions.

4.5.2 *Data analysis*

The data analysis was undertaken in a number of stages. Firstly, a descriptive write up of the six volunteer-involving organisation case studies which captured the detail of programmes as provided by the interviewees, and the supplementary documentation provided. The second stage made use of NVivo software to code the interview data, starting firstly with the themes from the question asked, before moving on to analyse across the interviews to find emerging ideas. The case studies were considered for their differences and similarities, and conclusions drawn in relation to the research questions posed in the research. The qualitative employer data was also analysed using NVivo software to code the interview data, using the questions asked to find themes, and then analysing across the data for additional emerging themes. Employer data was also analysed in relation to the sector and volunteering involvement of the employer, as well as the personal volunteering experience of the employee. The quantitative survey data was analysed using Microsoft Excel. Due to the lack of parametric data, and the low number of participants, further statistical analysis was not carried out and the data was used as a comparator for the interview responses.

4.5.3 *Limitations of the research methodology*

The research paradigm of critical realism raises some issues around the impact the research will have in relation to policy. The lack of ability to generalise from the cases or to find an ultimate truth about the relationship between volunteering and employability may limit the extent to which the research is taken seriously by policy makers (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). Choice of this paradigm outright rejects the notion of positivism that the methods of natural science can be used to study social behaviour.

The case study strategy has been open to criticism for having a lack of rigour or lack of systematic underpinning (Yin, 2009). The selection model chosen for this research demonstrates a systematic approach to both case selection and data collection. However,

the quality of output depends upon the quality of the researcher's skills in carrying out a case study from design through to write-up. Analysis of case studies has also taken criticism due to the production of lengthy write-ups with little analysis or reflection, and the researcher hopes to have avoided this by shaping the reporting around the research objectives.

As with all research techniques, there are specific issues attached to the chosen ones of interview and documentation reviews. The way the study has been designed means that it relied heavily on the willingness of participants to share documentation and views that it might not be in their interests to share. Although there was no difficulty accessing volunteer-involvers for the case study element, it was difficult to access employers willing to give the time to be interviewed.

Despite the limitations identified in the study, the research design has been constructed in order that the questions raised in the literature review chapter can be answered as fully as possible in order to fill the gaps in knowledge around volunteering and employability.

4.6 Summary and Conclusions

Due to the subject of the research and its focus on answering questions of a 'how' and 'why' nature, this research has taken a qualitative approach. Semi-structured interviews in the form of a guided conversation have helped build rapport with participants and as a result provided in-depth data to answer the research questions. Although quantitative data can help improve understanding of trends in volunteering, a qualitative approach is better suited to improving understanding of detail.

The critical realist approach has lent itself well to research focused on behaviours, people and systems. The case studies of volunteer-involving organisations involved in volunteering and employability programmes has allowed for six examples to be compared and contrasted in order to improve understanding of the role of volunteer-involvers as labour market intermediaries. The survey and interview approach with employers has allowed for collection of both attitudinal survey data and in-depth stories and experiences.

Participants were selected to provide a range of views across organisations of different sectors, fields and geographies, with contextual information provided as a backdrop.

Ethical protocols were followed throughout the research. Research limitations echo those usually raised in relation to qualitative research; generalisability, reporting and participant selection. Attempts have been made to mitigate these limitations, in order to provide a robust piece of research.

The following chapter provides detail on the six case studies of volunteer-involvers. Taking each in turn, key themes are addressed and issues are raised and discussed with reference to relevant literature.

Chapter 5 – The Roles and Views of Volunteer-involving Organisations

5.1 Introduction

The chapter introduces the six case studies of volunteer-involving organisations who are involved in volunteering and employability programmes in Scotland, providing detail on their role as labour market intermediaries, and on the characteristics of the programmes they run.

The chapter aims to answer the first two research questions outlined for the thesis, which are as follows:

1. What is the role of volunteer-involving organisations as labour market intermediaries?
 - a. What motivates volunteer-involvers to become involved in employability programmes?
 - b. How do volunteer-involvers see their role in the labour market?
 - c. How do volunteer-involvers relate to the labour market?
2. What are the characteristics of volunteering and employability programmes delivered by volunteer-involving organisations?
 - a. How is employability defined and measured in employability programmes?
 - b. What does the journey to the labour market look like?
 - c. Is all volunteering equal in an employability context?
 - d. Are volunteer-involving organisations recruiting volunteers into jobs?
 - e. What is the impact of this agenda for volunteering?

5.2 Case One – Mentoring and Coaching

The organisation specialises in formal volunteering, and they report that they have become involved in the employability field to meet a functional need that became evident through the number of people approaching the organisation seeking volunteering as a route to move into work, as well as a wish to use their experience to meet this need:

“So we have made a move into this market because we know we are good at it, and there is a need for it, and we would rather see us do it with our forty years of experience than somebody just coming in and having a look at our website”

Interviewee B

As a result of being involved in the employability work, the organisation feels that their role, and the role of similar organisations is shifting, and that despite the willing involvement of volunteer brokerage organisations and volunteer-involving organisations, volunteering and employability is not unproblematic:

“Volunteer Centres are becoming increasingly involved in employability, specifically in brokerage and adult guidance. The primary role is to help people get what they want; however, volunteer-involving organisations are fulfilling the needs of a client group that is NOT the volunteers. We are trying to get volunteer-involvers to look at this but without much success because they want the tasks done. We break down volunteering opportunities to suit both parties, it’s a bit of a seesaw relationship, and varies by organisation. Some see it as a success when someone gets work but others see it as a problem, so they can be uneasy bed-fellows. We provide on-going support to the volunteers, however it used to be more of a one-off, sign-posting role”

Interviewee A

The organisation has four specific volunteering-for-employability programmes running concurrently, and clients access the particular one best suited to their needs and circumstances. The funding that the organisation receives is focused on moving people into volunteering, rather than moving them into work:

“We don’t get funded to move people into work, that’s not one of our outcomes: our outcomes are to get people into volunteering, with a progression onto employment”

Interviewee B

At the strategic level, the organisation is part of the Joined Up for Jobs Partnerships, which forms part of the City Strategy for Jobs (Edinburgh City Council, 2012). This involves around eighty organisations with different specialisms working together to support local people into paid employment. The case study organisation reports that they can refer to any of these organisations, or be referred to, to best suit the needs of the

individual. Some of these organisations are specifically delivering employability services including training and placements and are therefore developing good working relationships with local employers. The case study organisation feels that the partnership approach is the most appropriate way to work as they can provide specialist support for volunteering, and others can provide specialist help related to their area of expertise:

“We are part of this consortium, but we are also part of the Joined Up for Jobs Forum which is the City of Edinburgh Council Job Strategy, so I think there are something like 80 organisations across Edinburgh, and we will refer accordingly. For example, there is Women Onto Work, so if we are working with a female client, and for whatever reason they don’t want to work in a male environment, we can put them onto them. Or if there are drug and alcohol problems there are other projects we can refer on to there”

“We are not set up to do CVs, job searches, interview skills, those sort of things, because there are a plethora of organisations doing that, so there is no point in us doing it”

Interviewee B

The organisation defines employability as a combination of soft skills that people need to help get them back into work, and harder issues such as work experience and references. They find that many of the clients they work with have a number of issues to tackle before they can move back into work:

“The majority of people we are working with are long-term unemployed or have never been in employment so when they start a CV, it’s a very very blank CV, so the volunteering gives them something to put on it, gives them something to talk about in an interview and also if they volunteer in a placement for... we have a benchmark of about six months, they can ask the volunteer manager there if they can use them as a reference”

Interviewee B

The organisation has four programmes available to clients who are seeking to volunteer for employability. These are depicted in figure twelve, based on interview data, and then described in more detail below.

This diagram, and others from the remaining case studies, will be discussed in detail in the discussion chapter:

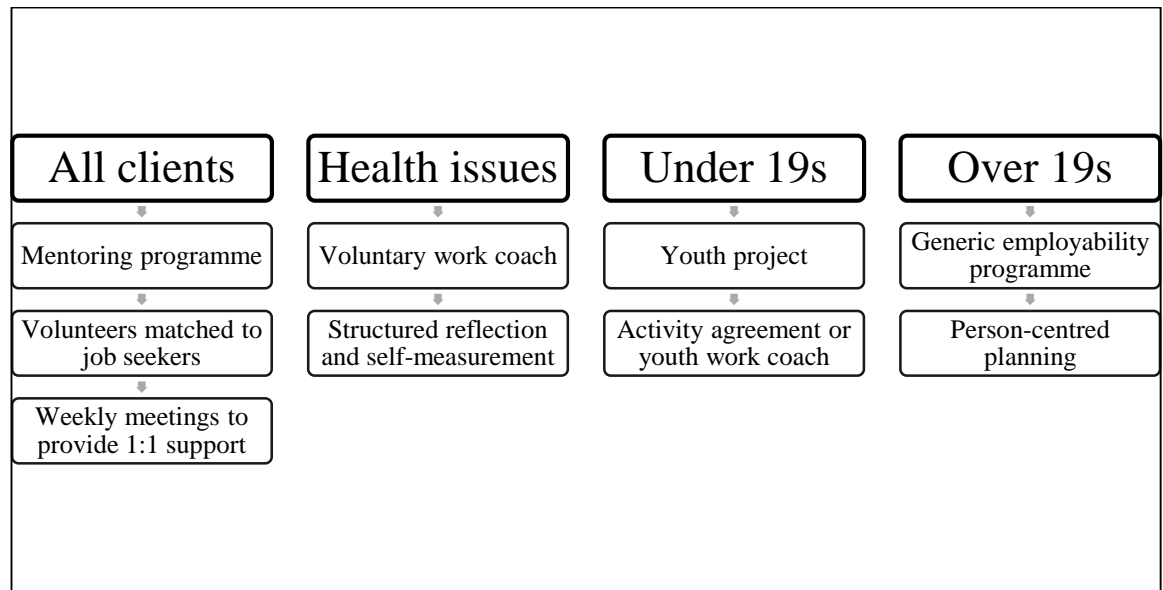


Figure 12: Case one – The employability programmes and clients

Starting on the right hand side of the diagram, there is a Generic Employability Programme which is for people over the age of 19 and is generally delivered in the four outlying offices – this involves helping individuals identify what kind of work they want to be involved in, and helping them get there through volunteering experiences. There is a Youth Project for the under 19s as part of a Local Authority initiative which is tied in with local Activity Agreements in order to provide a post-school opportunity for young people. If a young person is expected to be ready for work within one year, they will be directed to a Youth Work Coach who works with those who need some coaching to prepare them for work. If a young person is expected to take longer than one year to get into work, they will be signed up to an Activity Agreement (Edinburgh City Council, n.d.) and receive more in-depth support towards becoming ready to enter the labour market. There is a Voluntary Work Coach service which is for clients with health issues, predominantly mental health. These clients generally need a lot more guidance and support and so the provision is more structured and includes elements of self-measurement and reflection.

In addition to these programmes, there is a Mentoring Programme that sits alongside the others. This is provided by volunteers who are trained and then matched with clients who are seeking work. They provide someone for job seekers to "bounce ideas off" and get support from, and expenses are provided for weekly meetings to facilitate this. All these programmes come together to form varied employability support, and the organisation

believes it enhances their existing work with volunteers. They report that clients are also encouraged to access other parts of the organisation for specific support:

“For example if someone comes along and their mental health keeps them too far from employability, we can refer them onto our Health and Wellbeing Team. So they get a bit more support there and then they can come back. So there are a lot of cross-referrals within the organisation as well as externally”

Interviewee B

Volunteers access the organisation’s programmes in a range of ways. Some self-refer through word of mouth, others are referred on by employability partners, or Job Centre Plus. Job Centre Plus has a UK-wide initiative called ‘Get Britain Working’ with a subsection called ‘Working Together’ which encourages staff to refer clients on to volunteering (Lee, 2010a; Department for Work and Pensions, 2013). There is no funding attached to this but good working relationships developed locally mean that the local Job Centre Plus sends over clients who they think can benefit from volunteering experience. When the organisation first became involved in employability programmes, it proactively recruited volunteers through local talks and events to encourage participation. It is now an established part of the employability ‘market’ as their reputation has grown and they no longer have to promote themselves to the same degree:

“When we first moved into the areas, we had to do a lot of recruitment ourselves, we had to go out to speak to people, give presentations, we actually had people employed as community askers who went out and asked people if they had thought about volunteering. Our reputation has grown and we’ve moved towards, more into the employability market, we get them more through Job Centre Plus and the other employability organisations”

Interviewee B

The organisation finds that ‘career builders’ are more likely to find their own way into volunteering, perhaps looking for opportunities through the website, and applying directly. Nevertheless, they have experienced volunteer-involving organisations attracting volunteer at different skills levels, and noticed that not all organisations can meet all volunteers’ needs:

“Citizens Advice have good structures in place and good training...they get the higher end employability volunteers, the ones who are motivated and have career plans”

“Some organisations find them [highly skilled volunteers] hard to deal with because they are not used to highly skilled people. Referred people are more likely to be in lower socio-economic groups”

Interviewee A

The volunteers that come through the door are primarily ‘job hopefuls’: people who are unsure about their career path and hope that volunteering might guide them. Many employability clients have issues with low self-esteem, low confidence, are long-term unemployed, (some have never worked), reformed users and offenders, and those with mental ill health. Usually these barriers are disclosed when the individual first comes to the organisation. Due to changes in benefit rules for mothers returning to work (Department for Work and Pensions, 2012a), there has been an influx of single mothers who have little recent work history and want to volunteer as a way to gain experience. Those who work less than 16 hours and are keen to progress to full-time work can also access employability help. Anecdotally the clients are typically split 40/60 in terms of being recently redundant/long-term unemployed, and the organisation views itself as ideally placed within the employability framework to offer a quick return to activity within a wider context of employability support:

“I’d probably say we got a 60/40 mix, 40% recently made redundant and they are there to keep their skills up, or to fill their time because they are used to doing something, I mean there has been study after study that says that within a few days of being made redundant a person’s mood drops dramatically so we try to catch them as quick as possible to keep that motivation up. That is where we sit with the employability organisations, they can give them the focus such as their work clubs, CV building, the in-house courses we do, and we can grab them for the physical activity, get out there and do something else”

Interviewee B

The volunteers on employability programmes are offered the same catalogue of opportunities as volunteers who come in through non-employability routes. The standard practice of the organisation is to direct individuals to all opportunities and allow them to

select the ones they are interested in. For employability clients, they take a ‘whole person’ approach, which involves finding out what the person wants to do, what issues are present and how volunteering might fit. This includes person-centred-planning, focused interviews and careers guidance:

“A client that came and saw us, we would give them the option of the person centred planning, the careers guidance, but we also look at the whole person, are there other issues that are stopping them from moving into work. That’s when we do a lot of referrals on, or if there are money problems, we refer them on to that sort of thing. So we look at not just volunteering within employability, we look at the whole person within employability. We try to address, it’s a bit more person-centred, I would say”

Interviewee B

The choice of volunteering undertaken is decided by the client with guidance and advice from staff regarding the suitability of particular opportunities. For example, for clients who have been long-term unemployed, they will be helped to find a volunteering opportunity that interests them, and gives them a gentle introduction to work, e.g. charity shop volunteering, in order to introduce them to a friendly working environment where they will be part of a team. Once they have become comfortable in that environment, and are keen to try something different, they may choose to progress onto something more focussed on the career they are interested in, e.g. volunteering within a care organisation. The experience of the organisation is that the majority of long-term unemployed volunteers will take on more than one role (either concurrently or sequentially) in order to get two references for their CV and a mix of experiences and skills:

“For example, if it is someone with low-level mental health problems and I’m including confidence, those sorts of things, we would be looking at gentle ones that could break them in. So predominantly charity shops or gardening, those sort of things, so it’s group activities where you can get involved as much or as little as you like. Charity shops themselves are pretty good because they have banter, a lot of people go there for the company and the volunteering is secondary. So that builds their social networks, a lot of volunteers have made friends, some have met partners, that sort of thing. And then we progress them into something more career focused from there”

Interviewee B

In order to provide suitable opportunities to volunteers, the matching process takes account of existing and needed skills, and the individual is given advice suited to their circumstances. Although the organisation has access to a vast range of volunteering opportunities, there have been cases where an opportunity that is sought does not exist. Where this is the case, the organisation uses its networks to find or create a role to suit:

“For example, a guy came in from Estonia, and he used to be a telecommunications manager over there, very very skilled in Excel and those sort of things, nothing on our database for him at all. I spoke to a couple of organisations, ‘this guy is looking to create client databases, client recording and tracking databases, can you use him’ and they did, so we try to be as flexible as possible”

Interviewee B

Previous research has suggested that volunteers get little exposure to IT through volunteering (Lee, 2010a) which may suggest that either there is no demand for volunteers with IT skills, or that IT is not viewed by volunteer involvers as a volunteering role. The example above suggests that the individuals paid labour market skills did not map easily onto the volunteering market, which relates to Lee's (2010a) argument that not all volunteering roles have suitable equivalents in the paid labour market.

The staff working within the employability team report that they are linked into various local networks in order to remain informed about the local labour market. They try to map volunteering opportunities onto potential vacancies, advising clients of routes that are more likely to give them the skills to find jobs that are coming up in the area:

“The organisation is part of the Joined Up for Jobs Forum; all the organisations there have an employer engagement remit, so it’s about knowing what the labour market is about, all that sort of thing. There is plenty of anecdotal stuff from colleagues, there is a steering group that I am involved in, and so I hear stuff from there. The City of Edinburgh Council do a weekly e-digest of all those sort of things, so I subscribe to all of those. I also subscribe to NOMIS, basically every possible one to keep an overview of what is happening in the market, city-wide, nation-wide and UK-wide”

Interviewee B

The organisation considered offering an accreditation programme like VSkills (Volunteer Development Scotland, 2010d) but found the licensing and validation options prohibitively expensive considering the high number of volunteers they are working with. They find that although some people are not interested in accreditation and award, others are very proud of their achievements and wish to have them recognised formally. This is similar to research undertaken into Millennium Volunteers in Scotland (Danson and Cullen, 2002) which found that although the opportunity to gain skills, qualifications or accreditation from volunteering was rated highly by young volunteers, the wish to help others was the most common motivation for volunteering. The organisation is considering how it will develop accreditation but is already involved in the delivery of volunteering awards, such as Saltire Awards (Saltire Awards, 2012) for young people which isn't specific to employability, but can be used by young people on any of the programmes. Although formal accreditation is a focus for some volunteers, for others, the award is achieving something new:

"I have seen clients, not even accreditation, but they have come along to a manual handling course, or a first aid course, it's that level of excitement that they have achieved something they have never done before. So that is part of my reason for it, apart from the employability stuff, it's about someone having a bit more pride in themselves [sic] I would say"

Interviewee B

This echoes findings from Lee's (2010a) research which found that individuals who had experienced health difficulties reported positive outcomes relating to confidence and self-esteem as a result of volunteering.

The level and type of support that is given to employability clients is client-led as the need for support varies considerably. From previous experience of involvement in the Volunteering Options employability programme (Volunteer Development Scotland, 2010b), the organisation has learned that the timeframe for people to move into volunteering and then into work is long, and positive progression is more likely to be noticed over a timeframe of years, rather than months or weeks:

"The timeframe is very long, this is where Volunteering Options fell down, it all depends on the individual, their distance from the labour market, finding a job that fits with skills

and experience, and we notice progression over a longer period, perhaps three, four years”

Interviewee A

The majority of organisations in the area who offer volunteering opportunities also offer training and induction for new volunteers in order to prepare them for their role. The case study organisation will supplement this where needed. They initially offered pre-volunteering training but stopped it due to low uptake and now organise a series of employability workshops, known as the Map Programme, which provides training and support in confidence building, communication and self-esteem available for those with anxiety or depression. If a client needs particular help with job seeking, such as interview skills, they are referred onto relevant partner organisations that specialise in career planning and preparation. The organisation has a training budget, using money from the Big Lottery, that can be used to help clients develop knowledge and skills that aren't achievable through volunteering:

“So for example, I have a woman; she is volunteering in a charity shop to build her confidence, but wants to be a payroll administrator. You are not going to get a volunteering role as a payroll administrator, so we've paid for her to go through a Sage course. So she is going to get those interpersonal skills but now she is also going to have a qualification at the end of it”

Interviewee B

This example relates to the earlier example of the difficulty in finding a suitable volunteering experience for an experienced IT professional. Taken together, the two examples suggest that there may be market failure within the volunteer market in relation to IT. Specifically that individuals with skills cannot use their skills as a volunteer, but also that those seeking skills find it difficult to find an opportunity to undertake IT roles. Where the case study organisation is supplementing volunteering activity with support for specific IT training, this suggests that volunteering alone is not enough to enhance employability in particular sectors of work. It also suggests that were this additional funding not available, the individual involved would be unable to access the career she has chosen without finding additional support.

For its employability work, the organisation has attracted funding from the Big Lottery Fund and the European Social Fund. Some of this money comes through the Local Authority to this organisation and others. In 2010, the Local Authority set targets based only on people entering work: now they include entering volunteering as a destination, which is a shift in attitude towards volunteering, and suggests that they now see it is a positive outcome in itself. The organisation does not recruit people on the Work Programme as the funding they receive for clients does not allow them to work with someone who is already receiving funding through that route. As a result of this, the clients that the organisation deals with are typically unemployed for up to twelve months, as after that they will be referred onto the Work Programme by Job Centre Plus (Department for Work and Pensions, 2012b). However, clients can continue volunteering while on the Work Programme.

Around half of the organisation's turnover is from employability work, and this funding has allowed the organisation to grow. Core funding comes from Scottish Government, but this is not used specifically for employability work. The funders do not seek to influence the programmes and could only do so by not continuing funding as the majority is through competitive tender. The Work Coach programme, for example, was financed initially for one year, and is now in year five. As youth unemployment has become more of a political issue in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2012a; b), finance available for this has increased, enabling the creation of programmes specifically for young people. The shift from funding based on the employment results, to funding based on volunteering results, has been a positive for the organisation:

"We have a £600,000 turnover of which £300,000 is employability work. The organisation has grown due to ability to access employability money. Last year Edinburgh Council funded us on our results on job entrants, now we are funded on volunteer entrants"

Interviewee A

The organisation attributes its success in the employability field to the relationships it has built up with other organisations in the area. They are careful not to overburden organisations with volunteers who are job seekers as they are keen that both the individual and the organisation have a good experience. The staff feel that many organisations have reacted to the changing market in volunteering, revising what they are offering to meet

needs, e.g. shortening the recruitment process in order to get people started quickly. There has been a knock-on effect on volunteer management, where it has shifted away from long-termism and retention towards offering shorter; more skills focused opportunities in order to offer a balance between to fit the needs of the organisation and the needs of the individual. Some organisations have recruited job-seeking volunteers into paid work which has allowed them to see how the individual works before taking them on. This issue will be discussed in more detail in the discussion chapter. The case study organisation is clear to explain to volunteers not to expect this, as it is the exception rather than the rule and many people arrive expecting that volunteering will lead directly to paid work:

“We always make sure that we tell people at the beginning that volunteering may lead to a job, but we cannot guarantee that. We always state that to people because you are right, quite a few people do come in with that expectation, ‘if I volunteer there, they will give me a job’, or ‘if a job comes up, I will be a shoo in for it’ so we always have to explain that that isn’t always the case”

Interviewee B

The project staff also make clear to clients that the Third Sector as a whole is financially struggling so it is difficult for organisations to offer paid work to volunteers (Skills -Third Sector, 2011; Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations, 2012). As a small organisation itself, the case study organisation has to be sustainable and cannot expand the staff team rapidly without concern for the future:

“Yes, we do have a responsibility in some sort of job creation, but we are a small organisation, and it’s the sustainability of that. That is a problem for a lot of third sector organisations; they are paring the funding back and back and back. It’s difficult enough to cover your core costs”

Interviewee B

There have been attempts to capture the outcomes of the programmes both for internal use and to fulfil funding criteria. For the Work Coaches, the Rickter Scale (The Rickter Company, n.d.) is used to track developments. This was tried in the Generic Programme but didn’t work as people were seeking experience rather than soft outcome measurements. In addition, there is a bi-annual survey of service users which aims to

capture volunteer experiences: five case studies are also done to provide examples. An employability wheel was developed to track client progression during volunteering in relation to the development of soft skills such as communication and confidence, but it was found that people were not coming back to redo it once they had started volunteering, so there was no benefit:

“We devised our own employability wheel where we measured people’s progression, that didn’t work either and the reason for that was that, unlike the Work Coach where you work with someone for a long period of time, for the majority of people with us, once they have got into volunteering that was them up and running, and they didn’t need us any more, so it was difficult to get them to come back and do a second (or third) attack at the employability wheel”

Interviewee B

Through the Local Authority, there is a database called Case Link which tracks the full journey of any client during a period of unemployment. The experience of the case study organisation has been that the volunteering element is not easy to track as clients can have a range of interventions during a period of unemployment, and it is difficult to separate out the impact of volunteering. This is an important issue that will be considered further in the discussion chapter:

“There are some piecemeal statistics, but we can’t track the [organisation’s] impact. There is anecdotal evidence, including reports back from volunteers. We use the Case Link database for employability providers to track individuals, but the volunteering element is not easy to track”

Interviewee A

The anecdotal evidence suggests that there have been successes for people who have come through the organisation, but that success in some cases may be starting volunteering, rather than quickly moving into work:

“For us the success is someone just doing it. I suppose it depends how you measure it, and it would be easy to say yes, quite a few people who have volunteered with us are now in employment, and that employment is directly related to their volunteering, but for other

people it is just getting able to do something different...For me personally it is about people getting out there, building their social capital”

Interviewee B

The organisation reports that they try to get people started in volunteering quite quickly, as they acknowledge and understand that unemployment, particularly for those who have recently lost work, can quickly impact negatively on mood and outlook (Wanberg, 1995; Gowan and Gatewood, 1997; Howe et al., 2012). Due to this knowledge, and the established relationships that the case study organisation has with other local volunteer involvers, some people can be volunteering as quickly as the next day. For others it can take a little longer, dependent upon their readiness for volunteering. The process of a disclosure check (a criminal history check carried out by a Government agency to help organisations make informed recruitment decisions about potential volunteers and employees) is a barrier in this area because it can take some time and cause individuals to lose momentum and motivation, an issue raised in research previously (Institute for Volunteering Research, 2004). In this scenario, alternative volunteering options are found for the meantime, or the individual is referred onto a local learning opportunity or course to keep them involved in activity until they can start volunteering. The organisation states that they try not to pass people on to other organisations unnecessarily, but that they offer opportunities with external providers where they are suitable.

There has been some difficulty with clients with a criminal record, and the organisation reports that while they make every attempt to find a volunteering opportunity for everyone who approaches the organisation wishing to volunteer, they have to be realistic about individual circumstances and have to manage expectations accordingly. For example, there have been some ex- offenders who the organisation has found impossible to place, and discussions have been had with Job Centre Plus over how to engage these individuals in activity

Issues relating to the role of Job Centre Plus staff in referring individuals to volunteering has arisen previously, and drove the creation of a pilot project in South Lanarkshire ten years ago (Baird, 2003a). The pilot project evaluation report noted that there was research evidence that Job Centre Plus gave incorrect advice to clients about volunteering, and that there was “inconsistency within Job Centre Plus with regard to levels of knowledge, interpretation and implementation of the current regulations on volunteering and welfare

benefits” (Baird, 2003a, p.4). The experience described by the interviewee raises a question regarding the role of the volunteer-involvers in advising Job Centre Plus in relation to referrals to volunteering.

Anecdotally, the employability staff have noticed that individuals do not continue volunteering once they start paid work, although there is no data collected to evidence this view. In the organisation’s experience, class and family circumstances impact upon an individual’s willingness to get involved in volunteering, a view that is supported by data on who volunteers in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2010; 2012c). It is worthy of note that many of those who were referred through Job Centre Plus were not people who would typically volunteer. The Director raised concerns about the element of choice involved:

“The advisors must suggest volunteering as a voluntary activity, but the client might not see it that way. What are the expectations of everyone involved? Third party involvement in referral changes motivation, particularly if the third party is in a position of power. If volunteering is referred, is it a choice, and at which point?”

Interviewee A

Historically, volunteering has been seen as a middle class activity (Sheard, 1995; Harris and Rochester, 2001; Danson, 2003; Rochester et al., 2010) and, as such, some individuals have largely ignored it as a potential activity. This has challenged the organisation, although the neighbourhood development officer feels this may shift in time:

“There still is very much, I would say now, a middle class aspirational thing about volunteering, where it is very integrated into the family. It’s not easy in areas of social deprivation, because you are still fighting against ‘work for nothing, I don’t think so’. Slowly, people are getting to understand the benefits for them, and they are understanding the benefits for employability as well, but as far as lifelong volunteering goes in these areas, I think it would take a couple of generations before that would really take off”

Interviewee B

Employability staff feel that there might be a lack of aspiration in some people and communities and that volunteering is something that simply wouldn’t occur to them to try:

“So volunteering can give them a bit of aspiration, because they are out meeting different people, people who are not from their same social background, people who are not from their same geographical background, a lot of the clients we work with haven’t been out of their own areas for years until they started volunteering, and it gets them thinking about, well ‘I can see the impact in that’ or ‘this is something different’ or ‘I’ve met someone through my volunteering who is just fantastic and I’ve opened my mind so much more’”

Interviewee B

The staff have noticed that there are more males volunteering through the organisation than there were pre-recession. Data trends in volunteering have often reported higher likelihood to volunteer amongst females (Scottish Government, 2012c). Based on their experience of working with clients, the organisation staff report that although clients might develop skills through volunteering, they are afraid of ‘coming off benefits’ to try it out. This issue has arisen in previous research (Baird, 2003a). There are misconceptions of the impact that volunteering might have on access to benefits despite changes to legislation some years ago that allowed volunteering for all benefit recipients (Volunteering England, 2011).

5.3 Case Two – Accreditation of Volunteering Activity

The VSkills for Employability SQA Award takes its focus on the skills and learning developed specifically through formal volunteering and helps participants record and reflect on the employability skills that they have gained through volunteering, with a view to helping them demonstrate employability in the labour market. The programme is an SQA accredited qualification at SCQF levels 3 (known as Access 3) and 4 (known as Intermediate 1) (Fee, 2010; Scottish Qualifications Authority, 2010). The programme is based upon the SQA Employability Award, which focuses on the generic skills of employability (Scottish Qualifications Authority, 2009a; b).

According to the report to Scottish Government on the award: “the ultimate goal of VSkills for Employability is to improve the employment prospects of those people who are volunteering and not currently in work by helping them evidence skills they have learned in a way that will make them more attractive to potential employers” (Fee, 2010,

p.3). Further to this, the programme manager notes that the primary market for the award is those who need additional support to demonstrate skills:

“It is aimed at those furthest from the job market and less able to articulate skills to help them demonstrate skills to employers”

Interviewee C

The programme was developed in response to a number of issues. Firstly the Skills for Scotland report (Scottish Government, 2007), which raised concerns about low productivity, economic growth below the UK average and below that of similar countries, and a lack of appropriate skills, including soft skills, in some groups of the population. Secondly, reports from employers that potential recruits lacked the skills needed to enter the workplace (Futureskills Scotland, 2007; Scottish Government, 2007). Finally, the recession and rising unemployment and the need to enable people to (re)enter the labour market. This led the organisation to focus on employability, and

“The need to help people enhance their employability led to VSkills”

Interviewee C

The initial development of the award was funded through the Scottish Government Lifelong Learning Directorate. This funding allowed for the award to be benchmarked against the SQA qualifications portfolio, for some desk research to be undertaken to better understand the accreditation of learning, including experiential learning, and a pilot project to be established in five local authority areas and evaluated (Fee, 2010; pza, unpublished; Volunteer Development Scotland, unpublished-b). At the early stages of the process, SQA staff were involved in helping to find the best fit for the award within the Scottish qualifications system, and it was decided that the SQA Employability Award was the best fit, and that the outcomes and assessment criteria could be met through volunteering (Fee, 2010).

The award has been developed by, and is run through, the national centre, and licences are made available to local providers in order that they can offer the award to volunteers. There are currently ten licensed local providers. The licensees are a mixture of Volunteer Centres/Third Sector Interfaces, volunteer-involving organisations and local authorities. Licences are available at Bronze, Silver and Gold level depending on the number of

volunteers that a licensee will be working with. Achievement of the award requires a local college or accredited learning centre to verify it, or alternatively it can be delivered directly by colleges and secondary schools who are already accredited to verify SQA Awards. Organisations can work through a process to become an accredited learning centre:

“Organisations can apply to be an SQA centre, then they apply to deliver certain qualifications, then they are allowed to assess and verify people”

Interviewee D

Some licensees are also accredited learning centres and can therefore deliver the award from start to finish but these are in the minority, therefore the remainder have to work in partnership with accredited centres to deliver the award. There has been some anecdotal feedback from licensees about difficulties in *“getting local colleges to accredit the award”*. The potential for this to be an issue was raised at the pilot stage, with the organisation recommending to Scottish Government that provision be put in place for this, while noting that school pupils and the unemployed could access free accreditation from their school or college through existing provisions made by Government (Fee, 2010).

The award is based on evidence of learning by the volunteer and involves the individual using the learning resources provided to document and reflect on their volunteering activity and the learning they have had from it at various stages:

“There is an online resource with templates that volunteers can use to record their learning, reflect on their skills and record them”

Interviewee C

The volunteer journey through the award is depicted in figure thirteen below, and shows the progress from commencing volunteering to the achievement of the award (adapted from Fee, 2010). This will be discussed further in the discussion chapter:

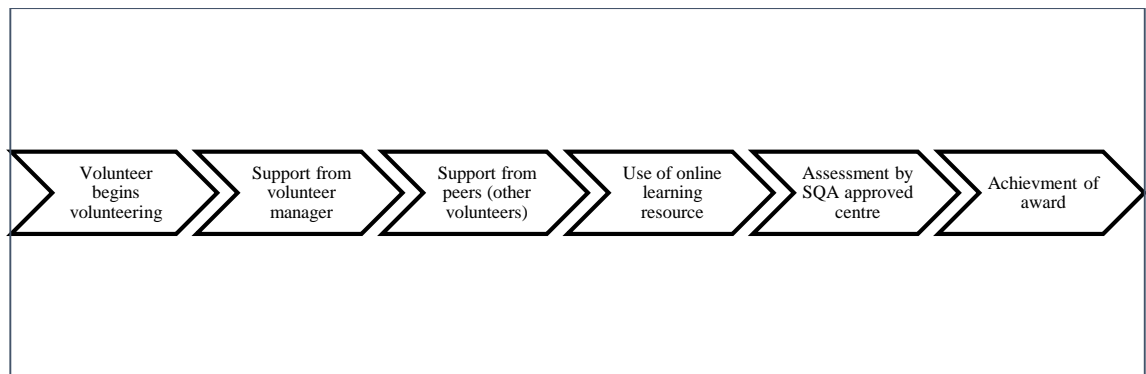


Figure 13: Case two: The VSkills pathway

The award is designed to be generic so that it can be used with any type of volunteering activity. It is expected that the volunteer would require support to achieve the award, and that this support would be given by the volunteer-involving organisation that they are involved with, fellow volunteers, and qualified facilitators such as school or college staff. Guidance for volunteer-involving organisations, colleges and accredited centres is provided as part of the programme. There is no time limit on the award, and people can work at a pace to suit them.

The award is what SQA describe as a Group Award which means that it is made up of National Units "designed to prepare people for employment, for career development or for progression to further study" (Scottish Qualifications Authority, 2010, p.14). There are four units in the award, of which two are compulsory and two are optional, but the learner must complete three in order to qualify for the award. They can complete all four units if they wish to do so. The units are in figure fourteen below (Fee, 2010):

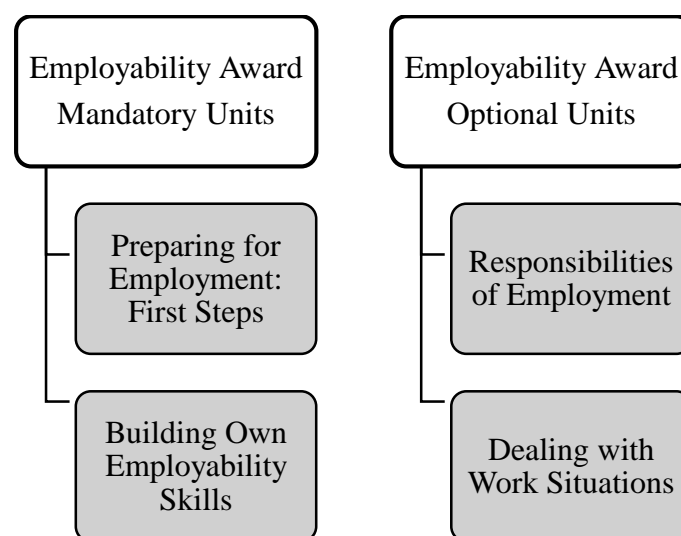


Figure 14: Case two - The Employability Award structure

The award was initially piloted in four local authority areas of Scotland and the findings used to shape the award. . There were two colleges involved in the pilot, and these were selected through a tendering process. Prior to rolling out the pilot, a set of focus groups took place across these areas with sixty volunteers. The focus groups discussed volunteering, skills and employability. They found that volunteers reported gains in both generic and specific employment skills, but that the ability to recognise skills depended on the individual's previous opportunities to reflect. One issue identified with linking volunteering to a qualification was raised: "while volunteering is seen as flexible, self-managed and less stressful than formal work, the structure and demands of a formal academic or vocational qualification were perceived by some as potentially at odds with this ethos" (Fee, 2010, p.9).

Just under half of those who started the award during the pilot phase went on to completion:

"Sixty-five volunteers started the award across the four areas, and twenty-nine achieved the award"

Interviewee C

The volunteers involved in the pilot were already engaged with the organisation as volunteers, and were therefore ready to start the programme. The pilot report acknowledges that If the programme goes beyond volunteers who are already engaged with a delivery organisation, it will be important to consider capacity for supporting this (Fee, 2010). Evidence from the pilot is primarily based on self-reported employability gains, with the majority of volunteers reporting that the award had enhanced their employability, that they felt a sense of achievement, and they felt able to evidence the link between their volunteering skills and employment skills (pza, unpublished). However, there was no testing of the award done with employers to find out whether it meets the needs identified in the Skills for Scotland report (Scottish Government, 2007).

Research carried out to understand the experiences of those who had undertaken the qualification at the pilot stage raised a number of issues in relation to the support of volunteers (pza, unpublished). For example, in order to undertake the award, volunteers need to be able to recognise that they are gaining skills from their volunteering, but, in many cases, need support from their volunteer involver to help them identify these skills

and apply these to the award. This means that the volunteer-involving organisations who have volunteers going through the award have to provide additional support for this.

The award was initially to be delivered primarily online, but the pilot identified that learners preferred to work from hard copy, particularly to allow them to discuss the content in one-to-one and peer support sessions (pza, unpublished). Peer group sessions were not envisioned as part of the award at design stage, but were incorporated by the local colleges who were involved in the pilots. The evaluation found that peer and tutor support were important to individuals achieving the award. As such, the majority of participants saw the award as group learning, and noted a preference for the group tutor printing off materials and bringing them along (pza, unpublished). As a result, resources are now available both on and offline so that they can be used in group or individual settings, but also completed and submitted online. One of the plans at the pilot stage was that individual volunteers could complete the award and then take their materials to an SQA learning centre to have it verified, however no individual has done this and so individual volunteer-involving organisations have had to play more of a role in supporting volunteers to achieve the accreditation than was initially planned, although the extent of this is not known.

After the pilot, the award was launched through a media and communications strategy rather than a physical event. The publicity and support materials were communicated to employers' bodies, organisations that work with the unemployed, learning organisations, volunteers, volunteer-involving organisations and volunteer centres (Fee, 2010). The award has since been promoted at conferences and events, as well as within the wider promotion of learning opportunities.

Since the pilot, the award has "ticked along" with little further promotion being done to encourage its uptake by more licensees. There is no longer a specific budget for developments, although the national centre plans to use the feedback from the pilot, as well as feedback from the licensees, to shape future developments of the award:

"There is a wider learning review of which this is part, it [the award] hasn't been only promoted and needs development, and we need to go beyond selling licences"

Interviewee C

An issue with the award at the moment is that there is no mechanism in place to collect participant numbers back to the national centre, or to gather information on the ways in which the awards are being supported and accredited. This is worthy of consideration and will be discussed further in the discussion chapter. In addition, little is known about what support volunteers need to complete the award:

“How much support do volunteers need to complete, and how do organisations support this? We are trying to understand this better. Who decides if it is level three [more support] or level four [less support]? It is the supporting organisation but is it consistent?”

Interviewee C

Further to this, with the exception of the pilot which followed up with participants, little further analysis has been done by the case study organisation or its licensees to find out whether the award has helped people become more employable, or whether they have moved into work. The wider learning review aims to:

“consider how people found accessing the award, map what colleges and supporters are involved, find out how many people have achieved the award and whether it was helpful for their employability, check the verification process, and pilot within other areas such as health and sport”

Interviewee C

Future options to take the award forward include developing the award structure for volunteers for the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow in 2014 under the V Active banner, which is part of a joint framework between Volunteer Development Scotland and sportscotland (sportscotland, 2011). Related to this, there are plans underway to create specialisms within the structure, e.g. for sports volunteers or environmental volunteers to identify specific skills gained through volunteering (Martin, 2011).

5.4 Case Three – Twelve-week ‘First Steps’ Programme

The case study organisation is a volunteer-involving organisation. They described becoming involved in employability programmes for a number of reasons. Firstly, an increased demand from people keen to become involved in volunteering as a route to

enhanced employability; secondly, the recession and rising unemployment in the local area, in particular, long-term unemployment. Thirdly, that the existing national programmes that they were involved in did not provide adequate funding to provide individuals with the support they needed, and finally because they were seeing an increase in people approaching the organisation with more complex support needs, who were not ready to start volunteering and needed more support than just being matched with a vacancy:

“the Volunteer Support Worker was concerned that we weren't providing the kind of support that we would want to in terms of the people that she was matching up, we didn't do any follow up to know whether people had actually gone ahead with their volunteering and for £50 [the amount paid to the organisation for each volunteer placed] we weren't really in a position to be able to...it was round about the time when the recession was starting to kick in, and we knew we were getting more people that were coming in and the reason for volunteering was employment opportunities”

Interviewee E

“There was an increase in the number of people coming with more complex support needs as well which was what alerted [the Volunteer Support Worker] in the first place, she was getting people through the door, who for want of a better word, were dissolving in front of her as she was going through the volunteering opportunities folder, which is just what we would generically do, with somebody who comes in”

Interviewee F

The area is mainly a commuter base for the nearby city, and there is little industry to speak of. The recession brought about a high level of white collar redundancy as many managerial and professional jobs were lost as a result of the downturn (Barr, 2011a). The local authority is the biggest employer in the area, and the majority of new jobs are in care, hospitality and retail. Although care is a one of the biggest emerging areas of employment locally, the organisation has found that it is difficult for individuals to get care experience through volunteering as many organisations are wary of involving volunteers in their work:

“Care is always a perennial problem though, it's fair enough knowing that it's an area that people want to move into, and it's fair enough knowing that it's quite a good one as

far as the current job market is concerned, but it's another thing getting a lot of care organisations to have volunteering opportunities because a lot of care settings are either private, or very risk averse to having volunteers, because in CHCP [Community Health and Care Partnership] which runs the public sector care settings in the area, HR is very averse to having volunteers involved”

Interviewee E

The Local Authority ensures that there are Community Benefit Clauses in new developments, meaning that a number of ring-fenced job interviews are provided for local people:

“East Renfrewshire Council are very keen to make sure that any Community Benefit Clause of any planning extension that goes in, actually has a meaningful translation into labour market benefits. So it’s not just enough to say “we agree to employ locally”, they have to actually enter into an employer engagement agreement”

Interviewee F

The local employability partnership, of which the case study organisation is a member, shares information on upcoming recruitment days and available training for employability, which the organisation can then share with volunteers. The local authority has an employability service which delivers many of these opportunities locally, and the interviewees report that they have offered opportunities for job seekers to access HGV qualifications and SVQs (further details are provided in East Renfrewshire Council, 2013). In some of the entry-level jobs that come up locally, there is little need for qualifications, so there isn’t always a demand for them:

“But more often than not, it’s about supermarkets, so checkouts, stacking shelves, so entry level jobs, which is really good for the people coming through our programme as there isn’t a huge amount of training or qualifications that need to go beforehand for them to have a shot at an interview”

Interviewee F

Due to their relationship with employability partners locally, and a greater awareness of the local labour market, the organisations staff have found that the majority of jobs arising locally are entry-level, which according to Barr (Barr, 2011a) reflects the expansion of

the service sector and results in more part-time and entry level posts. Barr also notes in his analysis that “retail provides many with lower qualifications an entry into the labour market therefore growth in this sector is crucial to provide many unemployed a route back into employment” (Barr, 2011a, p.34).

In the early days of the employability partnership the member organisations were less knowledgeable about the local labour market, but some research (e.g. Barr, 2011a; b) has now been undertaken to map the area and get a better understanding of where the skills and experience gaps are. As a local partner, the case study organisation is made aware of upcoming job opportunities and they in turn can help volunteers to find volunteering opportunities that will help them develop the relevant skills needed. The organisation has also done some local scoping to help them to better understand the demand for volunteering at the local level. The wider role of the organisation in increasing the capacity of third sector organisations locally gives it an ‘in’ to help address issues relating to finding suitable opportunities for volunteers (Voluntary Action East Renfrewshire, 2011).

“Again it’s probably a judgement call, I’m building relationships, there’s new organisations coming on board from time to time, we are always looking for new opportunities as well. If I can have the chance to go out and meet organisations, that’s part of my identified role as well, if new organisations are coming on board it’s about that opportunity to go out and have a face-to-face meeting with them, to have that chat with them about the Employability Project – can they provide this type of support, I tell them the type of support we are looking for”

Interviewee G

The First Steps programme (Voluntary Action East Renfrewshire, n.d.) ran initially for one year as a pilot and was funded through the Job Centre Plus Deprived Area Fund (Department for Work and Pensions, 2009b). The idea of the pilot was to test the waters, to see if people were interested and whether or not it would be beneficial for unemployed people to become involved in volunteering. The focus was on areas of deprivation, as defined by the Scottish Government Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) postcodes (Scottish Government, 2012d) where people are generally under-represented in volunteering (Scottish Government, 2012c). The case study organisation collected data during the pilot which indicated that there were forty referrals to the pilot, of whom

twenty-five went on to volunteer. As the aim of the project was to improve employability skills through engaging in a meaningful activity, volunteering, the pilot was successful in that it engaged those twenty-five people in volunteering. Although it was not a target to get people into work, the organisation found that around one third of participants went into employment as a result of being involved in the project:

“I'd say there was about twenty-five who went into volunteering; there was about a third of them who went into a working paid role, whether it was full or part time. Obviously, that's not something we offer through the project, we offer people the opportunity to gain skills through volunteering, and a lot of support during the first three months of their volunteering role. We don't guarantee them by any manner of means, employment, but it's a great bonus if they do get that”

Interviewee G

The organisation found that the pilot participants were typically aged between thirty and fifty:

“The pilot project was predominantly over 30, in fact there were no young people referred to the pilot. There was definitely no young people from the 16-25 age bracket”

Interviewee F

The outline for the pilot programme, based on interview data, is in figure fifteen below:

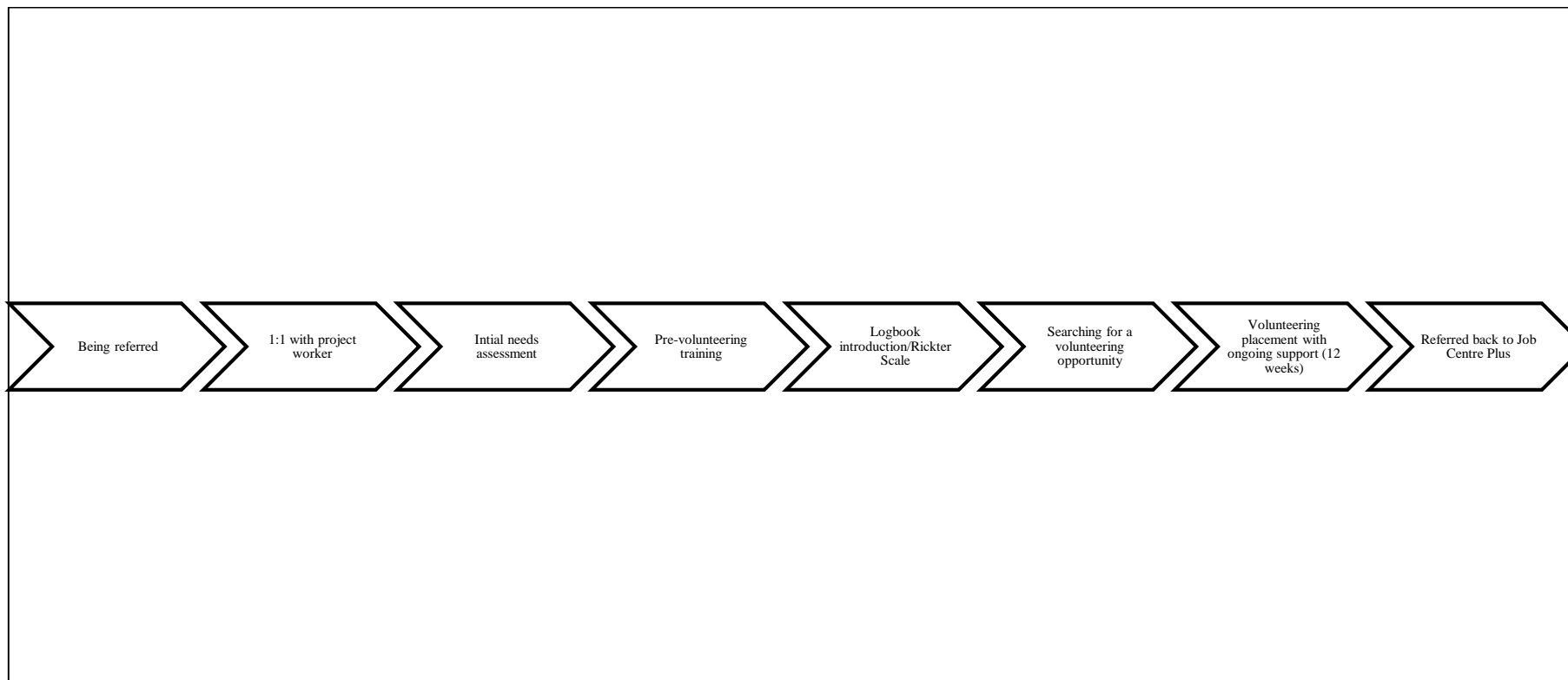


Figure 15: Case three – The pilot programme process

The support provided is focused on the volunteering rather than for work searches, for which support is provided through other members of the employability partnership. The pilot was strictly controlled through Job Centre Plus and was only available to those on certain benefits, and who had a one-to-one advisor. One of the reasons for the development of the programme was that Job Centre Plus advisors did not have the time to sit and examine clients' issues individually:

“What the Job Centre were telling us very clearly in the pilot was that they don't have the time to sit down with every single one of their clients to say “what are the issues, what are the problems, let me mark these down so that we can find you something” so what they do is refer them on to an agency who can”

Interviewee F

Part of the first year involved building relationships with Job Centre Plus, reminding them to refer people on, because although the funding was coming from there, this did not mean that advisors would refer on to the programme. This echoes findings from previous work that Job Centre Plus staff were more likely to refer clients onto volunteering after having attended sessions explaining what volunteering was and how it fit with benefit regulations (Baird, 2003a). The pilot clients were easy to place in volunteering as they were already engaged with Job Centre Plus, accessing benefits and ready to undertake activity, Research undertaken in England on the relationship between volunteering and employability used similar individuals in their sample (Hirst, 2000).

The pilot programme has now been developed into a full programme which has been funded for twenty one months through the European Social Fund Priority 5 (East Renfrewshire Council, 2012). At this stage it has been expanded to take in the second, neighbouring, Local Authority area of Renfrewshire (Voluntary Action East Renfrewshire, 2011). The funding from ESF differs from the Job Centre Plus funding, which means that the programme is more relaxed about referrals. This means that participants do not need to be on specific benefits to access the programme, and that referrals can also be from within the case study organisation or people can self-refer:

“The P5 project is more about targeting those who are not necessarily at that stage, so they haven't engaged with anybody yet. They haven't signed on, they haven't been down to Work ER, or they have but they just aren't engaging with what they have to do. They

have multiple barriers, and those barriers can be anything from addiction to mental health, depression and they have never worked before and they don't know where to start”

Interviewee F

There was a notable difference between the clients in the pilot, compared to the clients coming through the full programme:

“This year, it’s been people who have more complex situations, this is a pejorative term, but maybe slightly more chaotic lifestyles, people with addictions, people with mental health issues so there is a whole set of other things that you are working with”

Interviewee E

The organisation has found that self-referrals tend to be older people who have the confidence and knowledge to seek support. The only programme criterion is that participants must be unemployed and seeking employment. Anyone interested in volunteering in order to switch careers can use the generic service to get involved in volunteering rather than the funded programme. The programme targets those who have not engaged yet in employability help, or who have but are still struggling. The clients range in age, but more recently there have been more seventeen to twenty-five year olds coming through as the Scottish and UK Governments (and therefore Job Centre Plus) focus have switched to youth unemployment (Department for Work and Pensions, 2012c; Scottish Government, 2012a; b):

“The change in referrals as far as young people are concerned is about a change in focus around employability, where the money is about; youth unemployment is the main focus for nearly every employability service. So any referrals that would be coming through our door who are coming from a referral agency, their main priority are young unemployed, so Job Centre Plus main priority is 18-21 year olds. So they have to find them some meaningful engagement because that’s what the Government wants them to focus on”

Interviewee F

Some clients have never worked before. Clients tend to have multiple barriers to tackle before commencing volunteering, and the project worker tries to break those barriers into achievable ‘chunks’ so that they can work through them at their own pace. The high

incidence of clients with multiple barriers to work echoes research undertaken in Glasgow eleven years ago, which found that a high number of job seekers who were not on JSA had multiple barriers to seeking work and that there was not always suitable provision within Job Centres to provide for this (McGregor et al., 2003).

The employability programme pathway, based on interview data is depicted in figure sixteen below. In the discussion chapter, this pathway is compared to the Scottish Government Strategic Skills Pipeline, and the pathways from the other cases:

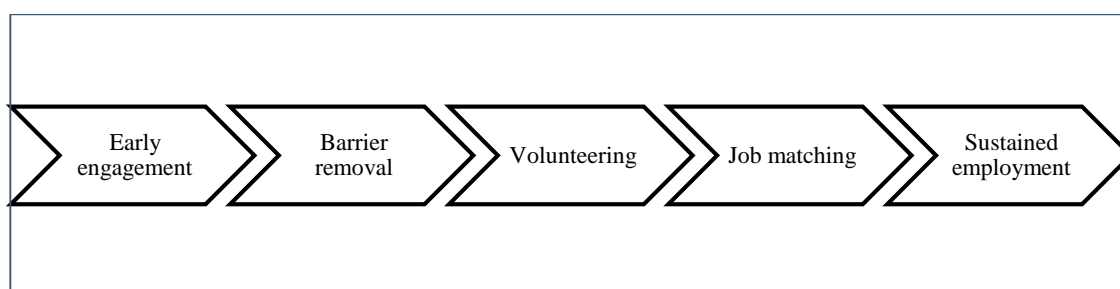


Figure 16: Case three – The five-stage employability pathway

The pathway, which mirrors the Strategic Skills Pipeline (Scottish Government, 2012e), and provides a framework for people to work through from early engagement to sustained employment. This echoes previously defined pathways such as the ‘journey from benefits into work’ employability pathway (McGregor et al., 2003). The aim of the project is to demonstrate movement along the pathway, not necessarily to get all participants to stage five within the timescale of the twelve week volunteering placement, and not to assume that everyone starts at stage one. The organisation has found that some participants drop in and out as life gets in the way but their rule is to welcome people back into the programme if this happens:

“We have to be able to demonstrate where on the Employability Pathway (pipeline) you are, so whether you are at stage one which is early engagement, or stage five which is sustained employment. We have to demonstrate where you have come in, what support has been put in place for you, and where you leave, so when you are finished the twelve week programme, which stage of the pipeline you are at. Our project is about demonstrating the movement, so it's not about getting from stage one right through to stage five, to sustained employment, it's about how we, through our supports, are able to demonstrate that you entered at stage one, early engagement, not very confident, maybe

a lot of barriers, are then able to progress through to ideally, leaving our programme at stage three where you are seeking employment”

Interviewee F

The funding that the programme has received requires the organisation to provide detailed reporting on the individuals accessing the programmes and their outcomes. The original pilot programme required reporting by location and benefit as well as a narrative on the support provided, the activities undertaken, the outcomes and whether it was deemed to be a success. The ESF programme requires more detail to be catalogued about each individual as well as a report on where targets have been met and unmet:

“There is other criteria that goes along with it, but the P5 project is far more prescriptive than the Deprived Area Fund was, European Funding is an absolute nightmare for the hoops you have to jump through and catalogue, and they are a lot more prescriptive about multiple deprivation, length of unemployment (less than three months, six to twelve months), they do ask you to catalogue and monitor an awful lot of information in order for that to go through, so that they get a very clear picture of who is coming through the door and what employability supports they are getting”

Interviewee F

The organisation hopes that by the end of the programme, they will have a better understanding of the local landscape, what worked, what did not and the local support needs so that they can focus on gaps in future work. The discussion chapter will discuss the evaluation that this thesis makes of the case study programmes.

Some of the issues that have arisen within the project are that people go "off the radar" for periods of time and do not turn up to the arranged meetings. The programme is deliberately flexible in order to allow people to access the support they need and sometimes it has turned out that someone has needed some space away, and then comes back at a later date. As the full programme is open to a wider spread of clients than the pilot, the project worker has noticed that the individuals coming through are less aware of what they want to do, and do not feel they have a lot to offer as volunteers. This means that the project worker has to spend more time and effort supporting these individuals, as well as doing more "hand holding" to get them through the programme:

“This is about taking individuals who think that they don’t have a huge amount to offer and working backwards, so what do you do, how to you manage that, “how do you manage to get your kids out to school on time, how do you manage to amuse them”, ok, so you do this, so you are good at organising, working back that way, getting a skill set to then match them with an opportunity that will allow them to show how good they are, to demonstrate that and grow their confidence”

Interviewee F

As a result of this, the organisation has offered ad hoc additional training on areas where they have identified common needs amongst the client group, such as confidence building in order to provide further support at a group level, and to encourage peer support. Confidence building is a key building block in many volunteering for employability programmes, and is often reported by participants as a notable gain from volunteering (Gay, 1998; Stopforth, 2001; Ockenden and Hill, 2009):

“It’s also good for them to meet other people in the same situation as themselves. Before Christmas we ran a confidence building course and it ran for six weeks, there were about six volunteers in it, and it seemed to work quite well. We did a bit of goal setting, a bit of positive thinking, and week-by-week people were opening up more, and like [interviewee E] said, we came down for a break in-between and take them out the formal setting, it’s amazing how much people open up and relax, and they did benefit from that as well”

Interviewee G

The project worker has developed good relationships with other local volunteer-involving organisations and so is able to make a judgement call about whether an organisation and volunteer will be a good match, and whether there will be suitable support for the volunteer:

“It’s not as simple as just finding an opportunity that matches. Particularly considering that a lot of the individuals who come through [interviewee G’s] project have had a lot of support to get them to the point where they are now ready to take a volunteering opportunity, and that still needs to have that careful handling. So although we don’t expect every organisation who takes on one of our opportunities to have one individual who will constantly be with that volunteer, they do have to have a named contact, they do need to have a clear defined role, that allows them to understand when they start, what

they will be expected to do, what tasks they will be undertaking, who to go to if they have an issue, but equally [Interviewee G] remains as a support”

Interviewee F

Visits to organisations provide a way to discuss whether they can support employability clients, and what support would be available. All concerns that volunteers are matched with organisations which meet the organisation’s minimum standards which mean, amongst other things, that the volunteers have to have a clearly defined role, a named contact, and that they get something out of volunteering. Most organisations provide volunteers with an induction, a role introduction and expectations, while some provide specific training, and others train on the job. Due to the financial investment that volunteer-involving organisations make in the initial training of volunteers, some request that volunteers commit a minimum amount of time to the organisation in return for this investment. This may take the form of the number of hours of volunteering undertaken each week, or may involve a six-month initial commitment. The key is to discuss this with the organisation and volunteer up front:

"For organisations who have to train volunteers, so those that have specific skills sets that are needed, e.g. counselling, support, those who have to invest resources to train volunteers, they would have a minimum time frame of when you were allowed to volunteer for. If they are training you they would expect a minimum of three months because they are investing that time, that money, resources in you to enable you to move on. But not all organisations are like that. As long as the conversation that is had is a realistic one, then the majority of organisations are open to that and will expect some kind of movement as far as volunteers are concerned"

Interviewee F

Based on discussions with local organisations, the project staff are aware that a number of them seek to recruit paid staff "from within" which means that their pool of volunteers has a chance of moving into any paid roles that arise. This suggests the existence of internal labour markets which is a closed means of recruitment, restricting access to outsiders (Windolf, 1986; White and Gallie, 1994). In relation to the employability project, however, this is not a project outcome and therefore only anecdotal evidence is available to support this view:

"We haven't actually done any tangible research on that, from close personal contact with organisations we are able to see, e.g. Re-use-it, NDT is another organisation who likes to grow its own and where possible will employ from within"

Interviewee F

The case study organisation itself has taken on many volunteers in-house to their various projects and social enterprises which has provided an insight into the progress of those individuals, and has led to employment within the organisation in a small number of cases. Beyond awareness of individual developments through personal contact and experience, formal data on the activities of volunteers once they have left or completed the programme is not gathered.

Volunteers are encouraged to continue in their volunteering role(s) while searching for work, and encouraged to continue volunteering once they start work. However, this isn't possible for everyone who comes through the programme, and so the main focus is helping people move on in whatever way they need to:

"Some people are individuals who have gone through a level of support, and a journey of building their confidence and what they can handle, and when they get a job, a lot of the time that is enough to be getting on with without having to factor in volunteering. For a lot, moving on to getting paid employment is their focus. To me that's actually good management, and shows them moving on quite well, taking control of what they are able to manage and fulfil in a week. Hopefully as time goes on and their confidence increases in working, they may come back to volunteering at a later date. We can't quantify that with any research though"

Interviewee F

A twelve week programme of support commences on the day that an individual starts volunteering through the programme. This support includes reviewing the volunteer's log book, revisiting the Rickter Scale and exploring developments from that, discussing the volunteering experience they are having, talking through any issues that have arisen, and examining any barriers they face to volunteering and/or employment. The project worker speaks to the volunteer every week for the first few weeks of their placement. Review meetings are scheduled, but they can request additional meetings with the project worker if they need to. The project worker also keeps in contact with the volunteer-

involver and the referral organisation. The volunteering placements offered to individuals aim to allow them to gain confidence through trying things out and testing their skills in a safe environment:

"What we are offering is the opportunity to increase your confidence, increase your communication skills, working with others, try out different areas that you may then want to find a job in, testing out what skills you have in a safe environment, so that you can you can make mistakes"

Interviewee F

The pre-volunteering training offered runs when there are enough participants to make it viable, so sometimes new volunteers have a short wait before they can attend that and then start to consider volunteering placements. The organisation can typically move someone into volunteering within one week, or it may take up to four or five weeks, depending on the circumstances of the individual.

The unique offering for employability clients which is different from other clients is the additional on-going support from the project worker. This involves providing clients with a point of contact through regular meetings and telephone calls, reviewing their development, and addressing concerns as they arise. Each volunteer is given a logbook which allows them to track their learning, skills development and confidence over time with a view to helping them write their CV later on.

"the pilot showed us that it's not a case of a straight volunteer match like we would do through the generic service, this needs to have a wee bit more involved in it, a wee bit more support, contact and continuity with the individual to make sure they do fill in the log book because that's really important. So they don't miss something that they are learning, they are increasing their skills, getting more confident."

Interviewee F

Clients are encouraged to use the logbook on their placement in order to log tasks undertaken, how they felt about them, and what they have learned in order that they can see their development over time:

"If you get them to use their log book effectively and properly, which [Interviewee G] talks them through, they can see for themselves "when I started out, I didn't know what to do if I missed the bus, but now I do, and I don't need to go through [Interviewee G] any more" so there are small things like that, that are second nature to somebody who has been working, has been regularly involved in and coming up against: "my car got a flat, my kid is sick", that comes as second nature to somebody, but for someone who hasn't been there before, that is a curve-ball which you would think "oh my god, I don't know what to do" so they would go to [Interviewee G], but by the end of the project what we would be hoping to see is that they no longer need to go to [Interviewee G] as the first point of contact"

Interviewee F

The sense that some unemployed people are unprepared for working life also arose in the research carried out by Lee (2010a) on incapacity benefit recipients. The project also supports individuals to re-do the Rickter scale (The Rickter Company, n.d.) three times over the twelve weeks in order to see movements in their confidence and skills and to allow them to make provision for their on-going support needs. The level of support and amount of input is aimed to decrease over time in order that individuals are empowered to tackle issues themselves. A key part of the early meetings is in helping individuals to identify and create their own support networks for life in order that they can tackle issues:

"What the First Steps project is helping them to do is look at what backup they have in place to allow them to deal with those issues; what systems, what support networks, what practical steps can they take to see who around them can help them deal with it, and that is basically what the project looks at. It's not about saying, by the end of this project you will be employable, it's about saying by the end of this project you will feel more employable. You will be in more control, you will understand more clearly what you want to do and you will know where to go to next, for the next stage"

Interviewee F

The organisation is very clear that they offer specialist support around volunteering and draw the line at providing support for job searching. There are many other organisations in the employability partnership who fulfil that need. The Local Authority employability service, for example, provides mock interviews and CV guidance as well as local job club support. In the local area, responsibility for this type of support has been unclear as many

organisations offer employment support, echoing previous research which found that overlap of both funding and provision is common, and recognised as an issue amongst providers (McGregor et al., 2002; McGregor et al., 2003). While being aware of the issues of overlap, the case study organisation and its partners are clear where its expertise lies: in volunteering:

"So we would be aware of what other supports are there but we very much draw the line that the job part of employability is not what we do. We do the volunteering and the softer support side, the job part is where we would refer on to our partner agencies"

Interviewee F

There is no formal training accreditation for volunteers accessing the programme but volunteers can be referred on to the Local Authority Employability Programme for accredited training. As the organisation is not an accredited centre, they would have to pass volunteers out to other organisations to have their volunteering formally accredited through an SQA Award such as VSkills for Employability (Volunteer Development Scotland, 2010d). For young people, the organisation delivers the Saltire Award (Saltire Awards, 2012) which allows individuals to track their volunteering journey and personal development and, for older people, the organisation delivers the Discovery Award (The Discovery Award Association, n.d.), although neither are specifically geared towards employability. The case study organisation would only give a reference where the volunteer had been placed with them directly. The project worker is aware that many volunteers are seeking a reference, and in turn makes it clear to organisations that volunteers may be seeking a reference from them:

"That's one of the areas I highlight when people are coming on board, reminding them that further down the line they will be gaining skills and hopefully a reference as it's something that people struggle with when they are applying for jobs. I'm always getting told that people are asked for references but have difficulty as they haven't worked for five/ten years for example. The organisations are told that they might be expected to provide this"

Interviewee G

Future developments planned include the need to spend time engaging more with volunteer-involving organisations, particularly new organisations or ones that are

volunteer-led, regarding what they can offer in relation to employability. It is recognised that some organisations are already very good at supporting employability clients, while with others the project worker continues to supplement them by providing on-going support. One of the plans for the future is to learn from the project and shape future developments around any gaps:

"So we should, by the end of the programme, have a very clear picture of what the support needs are, what the landscape is, what the improvement is by the end, that's what the P5 programme aims to provide, so that after 2013, to look at what came through the doors, what worked, what didn't work, and then we can focus attention on where we are going to develop, where we are going to go. We can recognise gaps where people didn't receive a service, so we can focus attention. That's the grand plan anyway!"

Interviewee F

5.5 Case Four – Volunteering as Preparation for Work

The case study is a sub-contractor for the Work Programme (Department for Work and Pensions, 2012b), a UK Government Programme developed to help the long-term unemployed into work. They provide a project worker who is the central point of contact for volunteering within the programme.

Volunteering became a part in the programme for a number of reasons. Firstly, the sub-contractor had previous experience of delivering a 'volunteering and employability' programme in Scotland for the Department for Work and Pensions at a national level (Department for Work and Pensions, 2009c). This previous programme was UK-wide, and involved offering those who were six months or longer unemployed, the opportunity to undertake some volunteering in the form of a "work-related experience" (Vegeris, 2010, p.1). Secondly, a manager within the prime contractor had a contact within the sub-contracting organisation, and through informal discussion it became apparent that the two organisations could work together in meeting the outcomes of the work. Thirdly, because volunteering was viewed by the prime contracting organisation as being a useful tool in helping people develop skills and confidence, and that as a result of this, offering volunteering meant that individuals were being offered a positive step forward:

"If they will do a bit of volunteering to get the skills they need then, like that, it will be a case that they see that as a positive step. It's not anything that they can claim on but it's a step forward in that persons journey into work – is how they see it"

Interviewee I

This is played out by the experience of the sub-contractor in the period since the work began, that some individuals proactively request to undertake volunteering while unemployed, while others are offered the opportunity to do so during meetings with their consultant.

The clients of the programme are defined by Job Centre Plus as long-term unemployed. The project worker notes that this is a mixture of people who have become unemployed during the economic downturn, and those who have been out of work for longer. There are a number coming into the programme who have been in the same job all their life, and are having difficulty adjusting to being unemployed and having to search for work. There are also people who have never worked who are not keen on starting:

"I would say it's a mixture of both. Because you do have the ones who have been out of work just over a year and they need that wee bit extra help. An example in this area is a woman who had been employed with the one organisation for 32 years. They shut down, she was out of work. She is in her mid to late fifties, and doesn't have a clue what to do. She is a victim of the recession, but because of her age, because she has only really done the one job, she has a lack of experience for going into other jobs...But you also get the ones who have sat on the dole since 1979 and don't think there is anything wrong with that – 'I'm getting my pension in two years' time, why should I bother?'. It's the two extremes you get, but it is everything from Managing Directors, people who have had their own companies, down to Cleaners, Domestic, you name it"

Interviewee I

There has been an influx of single mothers who have to return to work due to changes to benefit (Department for Work and Pensions, 2012a), and many of them feel they have no skills to offer, so support has been provided to help them identify skills that they have and those that they can develop:

"One of the things that happens during the interviews is that I will always ask them what skills and qualifications they've got, and a pet hate of mine is somebody who has been a parent, brought up a family, been at home, and turns round and says 'I've got no skills' and I'll sit with them and go 'right ok, you've been running a house, you've got three kids, you've got to get them out to school in the morning, so you've got to have time management skills, you've got to have organisational skills, you've got to make sure all your bills are paid, that the kids are fed, so you've got financial skills, budgeting skills, any parent has negotiation skills, trying to get their kids to do what they want them to do'. Things like that, trying to highlight to them that these are things they may not be aware of but they do day-to-day that are actually work related skills that they can take from what they are doing, use it in their volunteering and take it forward into the workplace"

Interviewee I

This experience that individuals do not recognise skills gain echoes findings from research, for example, research commissioned by the (then) Scottish Executive found that of those secondary school pupils who work part-time, only one in four recognised that they were gaining skills, and less than one in five recognised that part-time work might help with future career or CV building (Howieson et al., 2006). Similarly, Lee (2010a, p.149) found that his study participants "had very little to say about skills". This is important for the future development of employability programmes, and will be discussed further later in the thesis.

Programme participants are referred through Job Centre Plus. They are primarily on the Job Seekers Allowance benefit, although individuals on the Employment Support Allowance (formally Incapacity Benefit) can self-refer onto the programme. Individuals aged sixteen to eighteen are referred on after nine months of unemployment, while individuals aged eighteen and over are referred on after one year of unemployment. Individuals complete a survey and are then a computer package uses set criteria to place them into one of three groups, defined by the prime contractor as follows. The "Compass Group" are those furthest from the labour market, the "Academy Group" are those who need a bit of up skilling, and the "Hub Group" are considered to be job ready:

"They are put into these different streams though a computer programme, it is a survey thing that they fill in and it decides what category they go in to. But of course, it is very

much dependent on the information that they provide, and sometimes you get people in the wrong categories because they have just not understood the questions. Once they are in these streams, they are in with the different consultants. The consultants see them every two weeks, and if a consultant thinks that volunteering would be something that would help them, they will refer them on to myself"

Interviewee I

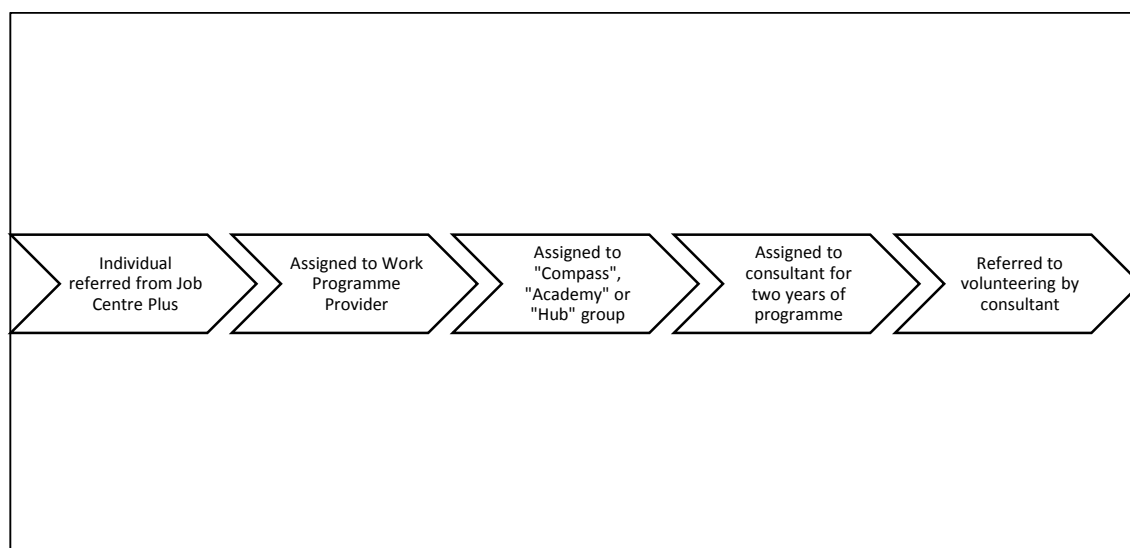


Figure 17: Case four – The Work Programme pathway

Consultants help people to develop their CVs and move towards work, although a high turnover of staff has impacted on the development of relationships with clients. Consultants have had presentations from the project worker about volunteering and what it involves, and future presentations are planned to ensure new consultants have up-to-date information. Consultants or clients can choose to try out volunteering, but it is not mandatory at any point. Volunteering is viewed to have a slightly different role for each of the groups: for the "Compass Group", as a way of getting clients into a routine and doing something, for the "Academy Group", as a way of targeting skills needs, and for the "Hub Group" keeping them motivated and busy, perhaps doing something linked to their job search.

The project support worker has been seconded from the sub-contractor into the Prime Contractor organisation for five years. Their work involves covering all but two of the Scottish offices. Consultants can book clients into the project worker's work diary, and a one hour meeting will take place to discuss volunteering. Reactions to the chance to volunteer vary:

"There are some who are really keen to do it because they feel it would be a good way for them to give something back while they are unemployed. They have maybe heard someone talking about it and have thought 'that would be a good idea, how would I go about that' and they speak to their consultant and their consultant will say 'I'll make an appointment with [Interviewee H] for you'. With others, the consultants will suggest it to them as a way of gaining whatever skills they might need, and I would say quite a lot of them are very receptive to it. Others will sit down and the first thing you ask them is, 'so you are interested in volunteering' and you get a 'No!'. And it's like, 'ok'"

Interviewee I

The meeting includes looking at the individuals' experience, their barriers to volunteering and work, their skills and qualifications, what job they want, and their availability. The project worker uses the Volunteer Scotland database (Volunteer Development Scotland, 2010c), do-it.org (Youth Net, n.d.) and individual charity websites to source volunteering vacancies for clients. Having a background in volunteering, the project support worker also suggests volunteering options that might suit, particularly those that are not immediately obvious:

"For example, I had a guy who was interested in IT, he wants to be a Network Manager, that would be his dream job, but although he's got qualifications that are fantastic, he has no hands on experience, so we've got him actually set up with RNIB as an IT tutor because it's showing that he's got the knowledge to pass on to other people and people who have got quite profound difficulties with using equipment. It means he does know what he is talking about; he'll be able to demonstrate these sort of skills, and say, look, if I can get people like this sorted out, using different computers, technology then it will look good if he is going for any jobs, that he has a clear understanding of what he is doing"

Interviewee I

On a similar vein, the interviewee reported another occasion on which they had to be creative in order to match individual volunteering aspirations to available opportunities:

"I had a guy on a previous contract who wanted to be a trainer, but in the area that he was, down in Dumfries and Galloway, there was nothing along those lines, tutoring or anything but one of his hobbies was fishing, so there was an opportunity I knew of where

there was an organisation who were looking for somebody to come in and teach young boys who had been in trouble how to do fishing. So he was still training people but just not quite the way that he intended to. What I was saying to him was that he is still developing the skills. He has to put things across in a clear manner that people can understand; he's going to get the feedback if they have understood it by them catching fish"

Interviewee I

In the volunteering interview, the potential skills that can be developed are discussed in order to help individuals identify their opportunities for development. In some cases, help has been given to those applying for jobs, and if the project worker has seen relevant jobs advertised, they will pass them on to the local offices or individuals. This is in addition to the project worker's key role but forms an important part of relationship-building within the programme, and keeping up-to-date on the local labour markets.

There are a number of barriers to volunteering for some of the clients who come into the programme. Previous convictions are a barrier for some, and the impact on whether they will find it easy to access volunteering depends on the type and number of convictions:

"It's actually easier to place somebody who has committed murder, and it's a one off, they haven't had any other convictions, than it is to place somebody who's had thirty convictions for petty theft. Because that's been a continuous recurring thing. You ask when they were last in prison and they say 18 months ago, the chances of getting them anything where there is going to be no temptation around, is going to be very difficult, especially when nine times out of ten these people want to work in shops"

Interviewee I

For others, the slow nature of the Disclosure process is a barrier to getting started volunteering, which has been well documented in previous research into volunteering and social exclusion (Institute for Volunteering Research, 2004). Some individuals find there isn't an obvious volunteering opportunity to suit their needs and interests, and so it takes a little more time to look at the various options available and decide which to apply for. Others have interests in doing particular activities such as retail work, but don't want to do them as a volunteer, while others assume that being a volunteer means you have to 'work in a charity shop':

“of course you’ve still got the regular problem of when people are asked to talk to you about volunteering, they will sit down and you say ‘you are interested in volunteering then’, and they say ‘yes, but I don’t want to work in a charity shop’. Because to them, that is what volunteering is, so it’s about opening it up and letting them see all the different types of volunteering that are available”

Interviewee I

Some individuals were previously involved in Mandatory Work Related Activity (Department for Work and Pensions, 2011a), which was a full-time voluntary sector placement, where benefits were cut for non-attendance, and therefore are suspicious about the impact on their benefits, or don’t understand the difference between this and volunteering because they considered the previous activity as volunteering as the placements were with organisations such as charity shops, where they worked alongside volunteers:

“We weren’t anything to do with it, it was run by the Job Centre, and people were put on work placements for thirteen weeks, they had to go there from Monday to Friday, 9 to 5 and if they were late regularly, or they didn’t turn up one day, then their benefits got cut. Because a lot of these placements were in charity shops, people automatically said ‘I was volunteering’ and they weren’t volunteering because they didn’t choose to do it, they didn’t get to pick what times they were volunteering, so technically they weren’t volunteering, they were on a work placement in a charity shop. So you are fighting that as well at times”

Interviewee H

This issue is worthy of further consideration as it suggests that there is still some confusion as to what volunteering is, particular where individuals are undertaking activity that it related to the state. That individuals consider volunteering to be any activity within a voluntary organisation will have an impact on their decision to participate, or their attitude towards activity. Lee’s (2010a) research found an important distinction between the volunteering and paid workplace, particularly in relation to the formality of activity, and the expectations that organisations put on participants. This is important in this context as it demonstrates that volunteering and work are viewed as interchangeable by the people involved.

Others are afraid of committing to activity, or ignore the organisations when they call them back. The project worker has calculated that around forty percent of those who are referred to the volunteering element of the programme simply do not turn up for the appointment that their consultant has made to discuss volunteering. For the sixty percent who do turn up, the organisation is having difficulty establishing how many have gone on to start volunteering as they have no procedure in place to check:

"It's doing not too badly, the problem being, as with any of these programmes, actually getting feedback on who has started volunteering and who hasn't started volunteering. They are very poor at keeping their consultants up to date with what is going on and basically what they have to do, once I've found them a volunteering opportunity, they are supposed to let their consultant know once they have started, so that their consultant can tell me, but considering some of them don't even tell their consultant when they start work, it's a bit of an issue"

Interviewee I

The only alternative way that the project worker finds out if someone has gone on to successfully volunteer is if the individual gets back in touch with them to update them or ask for further support, or if they happen to meet them in the office and ask how they got on:

"Yeah, well you might see them again, and only if you happen to see them again because they come in and you are back in the office, and you say 'how did you get on' and they might say 'by the way, I never heard anything about that' and you might have seen them three months ago and they never thought to say that they never heard anything until they actually see you again"

Interviewee I

The project worker uses personal knowledge of what is available, built up through experience within their current role and previous jobs, to pass people onto suitable training and accreditation opportunities. Within the programme, clients can undertake other opportunities alongside volunteering, such as a course at a local college, e.g. ECDL, or accredited training such as Food Hygiene Certificates. Young people can access the Saltire Award (Saltire Awards, 2012) in order to document their personal development

from volunteering. The organisation is considering offering the V Skills for Employability Award to clients (Volunteer Development Scotland, 2010d).

Volunteer-involving organisations know that people are trying to keep busy and gain skills but also have to meet the needs of their clients as well as volunteers seeking work experience. As a result, some have put in place minimum commitments in order to manage fitting in job-seeking volunteers with their need to provide a service. This means that the project worker and the individual have to make a decision as to whether they are likely to move into work within that minimum time, and therefore would be better off volunteering elsewhere so as to not leave organisations in the lurch in the event of finding paid work:

"For example Citizens Advice, I can't remember what the minimum commitment is, but they ask for something like three months, and it's because of the amount of training they have to put their volunteer advisors through first of all. Most people are quite happy to take that, they will say well, I don't think things are going to improve in the next three months, so put me down for that"

Interviewee I

Some volunteers choose a volunteering role that they will be able to continue alongside paid work once they move back into work, such as befriending. The volunteer-involving organisation is expected to provide the necessary training for the volunteer as the programme does not offer this prior to commencing volunteering. Some organisations invite their volunteers to staff training which is a good pull for volunteers as they know they will have access to additional training.

Some individuals come into volunteering with the expectation that it will lead to a paid job. The project worker tries to manage this expectation and notes that, although it can happen, the volunteer-involving organisations have equally been hit by funding reductions due to the recession. Research on Scotland's third sector, carried out by SCVO, found that spending on staff in the sector peaked in 2009, dropped sharply in 2010, and has since levelled off, but that the working hours trend is the most notable, as while the number of staff overall has remained steady, the level of full-time equivalents has dropped which "can be explained by an increase in part-time, short-term and lower paid employment" (Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations, 2012, p.6). Research

from England suggests a similar downward trend in employment levels from 2010 onwards, as well as an increase in part-time work, and a decrease in average hourly earnings (Skills -Third Sector, 2011).

The difficulty in tracking the success of the volunteering intervention in the programme is being addressed by the project worker through directly contacting the local offices to find out about the uptake of volunteering, and the destinations of the individuals. Data tracking on the programme has not proven to be easy, and the organisation has realised that this issue has to be tackled in order to demonstrate whether the programme itself, and the volunteering element is worthwhile. This is not a new issue for organisations, and was raised in a piece of research carried out over ten years ago into employment services in Edinburgh (McGregor et al., 2002) which recommended that better use be made of IT in client tracking, particularly where there are multiple support mechanisms in place.

5.6 Case Five – Life Skills

The case study organisation runs a life skills centre focusing on wellbeing. Employability is an outcome of the centre but activities are not focused solely on enhancing employability: they focus on life skills. The centre helps people learn practical skills such as picture framing, woodwork and cookery and the products made are either sold, donated to local organisations, or used at local events. The centre has developed relationships with local businesses and entrepreneurs, and, through this, businesses have donated spare equipment to the centre as well as financial donations. The organisation is keen that in future businesses also donate time so that they can experience the centre first hand, and understand whom and how they are helping people locally.

The organisation manager defines their role in employability as focussing on engaging people and building relationships with individuals rather than providing a clear pathway to employment. They base their thinking on employability around the fact that unemployment is a reality for people and so their role is to develop what they call "*useful unemployment*", specifically in the form of volunteering as an activity that those outwith the paid labour market can usefully undertake to benefit themselves and society. In addition to this, they provide help to those who wish to enter the labour market to develop their wellbeing in order to support them to access paid work:

"I think the starting point for the whole sort of thing about how we engage with people and work with people is dead critical, so the stuff around the engagement and relationship building is incredibly important, and that's relevant in anything because it is about people. It's about people trying to make a positive change in their life, no matter what the circumstances"

Interviewee J

This raises questions about the economic agenda that comes with traditional 'volunteering and employability' programmes funded through Government which put third sector organisations in the position of delivering on behalf of the state, rather than operating to improve individuals' life chances:

"So our job, as an [organisation] is to develop that associational life, to develop that useful unemployment, not necessarily to operate on behalf of more powerful national agencies that want our labour to be about getting people into work"

Interviewee J

Taking the wider welfare to work agenda into account, the organisation is critical of the UK Government's Work Programme which they view as too focused on fitting people into 'any job' rather than a job that will be good for them. They feel this isn't sustainable and may cause wellbeing issues:

"So if we are really wanting to get people into employment, surely it needs to be about developing their wellbeing up to a level where they can enjoy employment, or access it, but also not become sick as a result of having a crap job. There's that thing as well and I think that is one of the big issues just now in terms of the Work Programme: just get them into any job. Even if they have been on benefits for years, even if they have been on different support programmes, just get them a job, no matter what job it is, and the evidence that is now coming is that they aren't sustaining their jobs because of gaps in life skills, esteem, passion, values, stuff like that"

Interviewee J

Considering the wider agenda of 'volunteering and employability', the organisation manager is dubious about the gaps between the rhetoric and the reality of volunteering leading to work, and the apparent lack of understanding of the different experiences that

unemployed people have had, and therefore the need to recognise the different routes into and through volunteering and paid work:

"[on the understanding that volunteering leads to a paid job] well what about people it doesn't? And what do we mean by it leads to a job, is that people who would have found a job anyway? Or is that people who have been referred to us, that have just come out the jail, or have mental health problems all their life, or for significant periods of their life, or they are from a family who has never worked? That's a different challenge, so the volunteering journey is different, so is the access to it"

Interviewee J

The organisation offers support to volunteers, and the activity undertaken is driven by what the volunteer wants to get out of it. For some, their aim is to gain volunteering experience, in order to help them access paid work, while for others it is to provide them with a meaningful activity to undertake instead of, or in addition to, employment. The organisation sees its role in helping people achieve that personal aim:

"If somebody comes in here, and thousands of people a year do, and they've got a chosen outcome for employment, it's our job to help them to get the outcome they want"

Interviewee J

The organisation takes referrals from GPs, Community Education, Employability Projects, Education, Criminal Justice and word of mouth. The set-up of the organisation is purposefully informal, rather than top down, and volunteers are encouraged to support one another from the start, including setting up support groups. The organisation offers training and support to volunteers who wish to find work, but doesn't have rules about how they are accessed or whether they are accessed over a specific timescale; people can spent as long as they need with the organisation and can access support either full or part time:

"so you can start in the morning, you can do a half day a week or you can do five days a week. You can be here for nine weeks or twenty seven weeks or thirty six weeks, it just depends on you. We are always working to get people to move on"

Interviewee K

The viewpoint behind this is further explained:

"You do need to organise your resources, you do need some kind of anticipated structure in terms of how you are going to work with people. But you've got to be very careful about how adaptable and flexible that is and how it adapts to changing circumstances in people's lives. And the assumption [with programmes of a set length] is that after eight weeks, after eight weeks they will all be in a different position. Some will be flying, some will not need this, and some will need more. How can we say after eight weeks they will go into a job. If it was that easy, how come we didn't get them a job eight weeks ago?"

Interviewee J

The open-ended nature of the organisation's programme means that they are using funding from a range of sources to ensure they are financially sustainable, in addition to their core funding from Scottish Government. Grant income is supplemented by spot contracts from Skills Development Scotland to run life skills courses, funding from the NHS to undertake small scale research projects, and funding from the Local Authority to help young men from criminal justice. From a reciprocal angle, the organisation has an agreement with their volunteers that they can access the organisation for as long as they need, but they are expected to contribute to supporting the organisation and their fellow volunteers through peer support and mentoring. There are examples of individuals who have been supported by the organisation, and are now in a paid position in the organisation helping others.

There is a structured programme of training available for individuals to access, but their activity is not specifically based around it, instead it is in addition to any volunteering they do, and the peer support and mentoring activity that happens within the centre:

"this period is about induction and familiarisation, this bit is about development, growth and support, and this bit is about thinking about moving on, so you are always at a different part, but you have to always be at that part with the support of others"

Interviewee K

Some of the organisation's clients need support over and above what is offered, perhaps for a particular condition, and the organisation has a policy of not referring people on to

other organisations; if external support is needed, the external agency will be invited in to talk to the individual there.

The organisation has found that the people referred on to the organisation with an aim of accessing paid work have many barriers to face before they are ready to consider working, including disability, poverty, mental ill health, drugs, crime, and long-term unemployment. They have anecdotal stories from the organisation's clients of carers being forced into work by benefit changes, leading to the care recipient having to go into hospital. Many of the individuals who arrive at the centre, either through referral or self-referral, feel they have been 'written off' by statutory agencies. The Local Authority Criminal Justice department regularly sends young offenders to the organisation, but when other departments of the Local Authority want volunteers they will not take on these individuals:

"we do recruitment for the Social Work department, to get them volunteer drivers and befrienders, people to help out in social care settings, it's brilliant and the staff go 'but you better no send us anyone that's got special needs or convictions', and I think right ok, and then the criminal justice crowd under the same department come along and give me all the convicts"

Interviewee J

The organisation staff describe the local area as a place where industry is in decline, the public sector is the biggest employer, as well as the biggest volunteer involver, and there are poor transport links. Care is a growth area, both formally and informally through employment and volunteering, but this has disadvantaged local people with a criminal history, including those referred to the organisation by Criminal Justice:

"The only market is going to be older people in [this area], that's a growth area, care work, older people's agenda. That's the biggest demographic shift here, so if there are no going to be factories, there are going to be people who need to be cared for. I'm not saying you should make money off their misery, but that is where the work is going to be, and that's why we need to start working with the courts, stop young people from getting sentenced because that might be the only job they could get"

Interviewee K

There have been retail developments locally, but often people start a job in a new development, but are not kept on as numbers are pared back and they end up back where they started. The organisation staff view the labour market as being in need of more jobs, having been affected by an army base closing nearby, and having poor transport links within and outwith the area. The organisation manager feels that there is potential to create more jobs locally through coproduction and social enterprise to support the local community and the agricultural heritage of the area:

"[This area] has a beautiful environment, it's really brilliant stuff, everyone is growing vegetables, but no one knows how to sell it, so can we get a social enterprise going that could sell it? How can we no open empty shops so we can give people free food, you know, that's a job for somebody as well, so it's about looking at work differently"

Interviewee J

The organisation feeds data into the Local Authority system of tracking for employability which aims to keep track of individuals and their journey to work. They have found, however, that as individuals might get a number of interventions before they access work, it is difficult to attribute employability gains to any one organisation, which leads to issues with the payment by results system. The organisation manager feels that as a result there is a lot of double counting, and therefore the statistical outputs suggest a rosier picture than the reality:

"So it's that kind of mental stuff, but the data that comes out of the employment team, is about, if you believe it, because you've got all these organisations inputting numbers, they are working with the same person. So youth unemployment doesn't happen in [this area], they are all driving a Bentley and getting on fine because they are all getting counted about 12 different times and that's wrong"

He suggests that this research should focus on how useful information could be collected to assist with this:

"Maybe for your research it's about how do you measure it? Where is, even if it's harder to elicit, where is the quality, valuable information, instead of numbers because the numbers are absolute lies, people are falling over each other, when somebody gets a job"

Interviewee J

Internally, the organisation's project workers use tools such as the Rickter Scale (The Rickter Company, n.d.) to help individuals establish their existing levels of confidence and skill, and to track the changes over time. In addition to working with individuals to track their journey, the workers encourage volunteers to keep a portfolio of learning which allows them to keep a more detailed record of their learning and development over time. There is no accreditation directly linked to the portfolio, as the driver is the learning:

“So, in this organisation it is all about local learning, and that’s why it’s called Praxis. Now surely this more than anything else would be legitimate for accreditation, but accreditation would probably interfere with the whole concept of Praxis, because the educators in here aren’t the staff who help people to decode what they’ve learnt from their experience of being here, it happens in the dialogues between offender and non-offender, the abused and non-abused, the dying and the living. That’s dead important, if it was always accredited and driven that we got money through somebody being accredited, that would destroy this place, because it would be, you see guys coming in for their portfolios, isn’t that interesting that they are coming in for portfolios but they are no on an accredited course? It’s really interesting”

Interviewee J

Despite not promoting accreditation as an employability tool, the organisation is linked in to accreditation schemes nationally, such as Saltire (Saltire Awards, 2012), and locally with the local college, and so can make opportunities available to those who are interested. The Community Planning department at the Local Authority has recently visited the organisation to see how outcomes could be measured to help them evaluate interventions locally, although this is currently in the development stages.

The organisation reports that there are examples of individuals who have volunteered at the Centre moving into paid employment in the retail and building trades, or moving (back) into self-employment. Some younger people have gone on to College as a result of their volunteering in order to gain qualifications. The organisation has given paid work to some volunteers, while other local charities have also recruited some of the volunteers into paid roles. The organisation has found that people tend to continue to volunteer once they move on to other activities because they enjoy it:

"Once they start working, most of them do [continue volunteering with the organisation], there's people have joined our board of management, things like that"

Interviewee K

Beyond employability outcomes, the organisation reports success in supporting individuals off drugs, through terminal illness and has now been offered funding to undertake work on suicide prevention. The organisation manager feels that some of the outcomes could never have been measured because they were unexpected consequences of the work they do around helping people with whatever issues they have to volunteer:

"Do you know what, the biggest thing in here, some of the best things in here were never meant, and how could you measure it? 23 lassies we've had off of heroin in the last year... We find for a lot of young ones who come in here, or people who haven't been working, there is a big thing of hopelessness that has replaced that hope, and you need to instil that. These are the strong drivers for employment, health and wellbeing"

Interviewee J

The organisation works from the viewpoint that relationships are at the heart of everything they do. They have a good relationship with the Job Centre Plus who they visit regularly and give presentations to. They have good relationships with the Education Department of the Local Authority, which has culminated in all school pupils in the area getting one day off per year to volunteer. They also have good relationships with some local employers, but acknowledge that employer engagement is competitive as other local organisations and further education institutions also try to build relationships. They have piloted an award for employers who support local people through volunteering, which was successful with the six pilot organisations and will be rolled out this year to acknowledge those who provide funding or time or other support to the centre. The driving idea behind this is that the organisation uses its unique role in the community to build relationships with employers and competitors:

"employer engagement is massive, so your competitors are like the college, and other people, right, so what we've got to be sensitive of, is that they are already working with some employers as well, so how do we work together to get the message through, or how do you make more of the context of the relationship you've got with them depending on

the basis that they are seeing something here that they are not going to see anywhere else”

Interviewee J

The organisation manager feels strongly that evidence of volunteering enhancing employability will always be anecdotal because it shouldn't be the intention of volunteering to be a route to paid employment. There is a fear within the organisation that volunteering has become politically popular, and therefore more organisations have become involved in promoting volunteering in order to attract funding. The recent shift by Scottish Government to merge the voluntary sector and volunteering agendas locally (Pearson, 2010) is seen by the organisation manager to be detrimental to volunteering:

“The interface agenda has been a nightmare, bad for Scotland. Why would you have an Interface agenda when the biggest issues are tackling inequalities and unemployment? And volunteering has its biggest profile ever. This is the most important time ever in Scotland's history for to no have a volunteering movement diluted under a different banner. Because if it's hard enough for people to understand the logic that what is volunteering in the first place, more than that even what is the relationship between volunteering and getting a job, on top of that, the straightjacket of an artificial name that nobody knows what it means. It's so wrong”

Interviewee J

Related to this, there is concern within the organisation that procurement patterns in the sector are leading to the loss of autonomy of charities, as well as the loss of volunteers and paid staff as contracts shift from existing organisations to emerging organisations. There have been examples locally of emerging organisations receiving funding to undertake work, but then outsourcing the work to existing organisations that didn't get the funding, but paying them less leading to reduced staff numbers and reduced services locally:

“There is organisation in [the area], [name removed], they got money off the lottery to do skills because there was no place in [the area] to do life skills, then when they open up and get the money, they approach us and say ‘can you take on our punters’ and I think, this is quite good, eh?”

Interviewee J

5.7 Case Six – Social Capital Development

The case study organisation is a social enterprise which aims to develop individuals, communities and local service provision. The projects that the business are currently involved in focus on volunteering, employability, the environment, and criminal justice. As a new social enterprise, the organisation is reliant on project funding, the goodwill of their team of volunteers and the support of two paid staff. The organisations paid staff also volunteer their own time to the organisation over and above contracted hours. Volunteers have the opportunity to gain skills to help them pursue their own interests:

“Volunteers are key to the organisation. We have few resources to pay for staff, so we provide volunteers with a concrete experience and a way to use their skills”

Interviewee M

The organisation delivers employability support through both a structured programme, funded by DWP, and a series of drop-in services run by and for volunteers. They describe their provision as a way to help create:

“A level playing field for people to look for work”

Interviewee L

The structured programme funded by DWP started out as a ten week pilot programme. Participants were referred onto the programme by Job Centre Plus. The criteria for referral was that participants must be over eighteen, of working age, and unemployed. The ten week programme included at least three weeks of volunteering experience. Participants could attend the programme on either a full-time, or part-time basis, but they had to make themselves available for interview if asked during that time. They have found that the majority of participants is in their twenties and above. Figure 18, below, show the programme pathway:

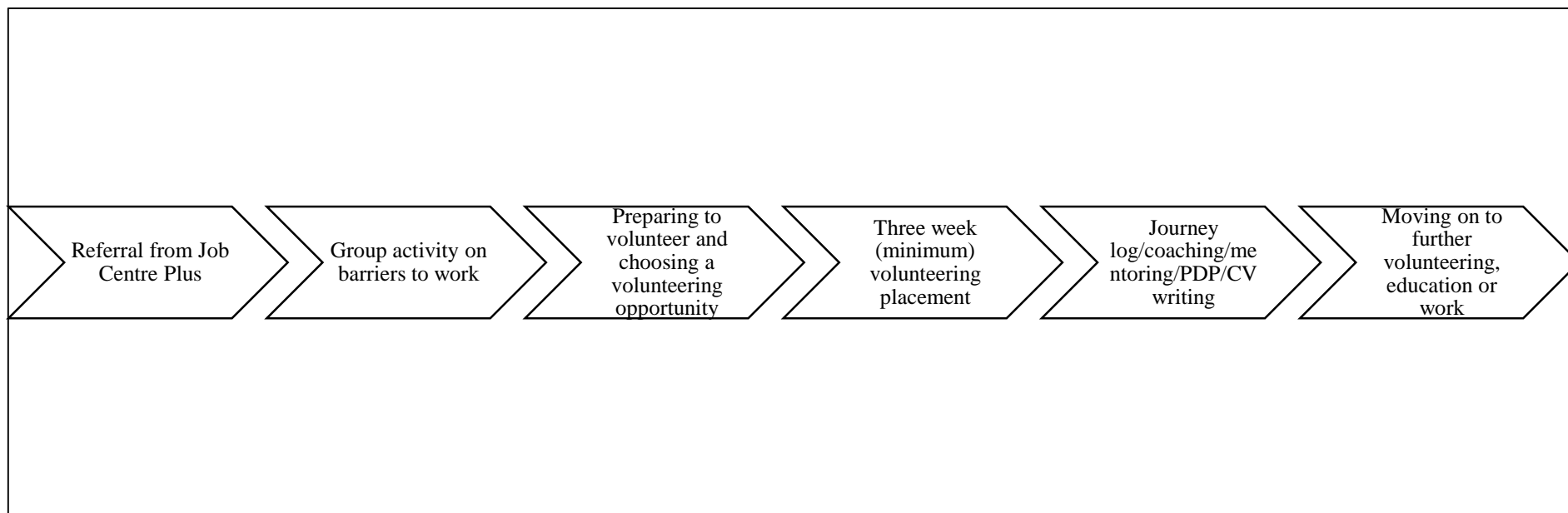


Figure 18: Case six – The ten-week programme pathway

The funding came through the Flexible Support Fund (Kennedy and Harari, 2011), and the pilot was initially funded for forty five participants. The focus was to provide:

“A structured experience with flexible learning options that would help people consider and tackle the issues that prevent them from accessing and sustaining employment”

Interviewee M

Although Job Centre Plus only referred thirty participants onto the pilot, many of those who attended completed the course:

“Two-thirds of those referred on to us completed, for others there was a natural drop-off as they were not ready”

Interviewee L

The organisation was successful in a procurement process to offer a series of three more programmes.

Volunteers from the programme have been placed in both the voluntary and public sectors locally. The choice of opportunity, and organisation is made by the individual based on personal interests, but the choice is supported by the organisation. Some participants do their volunteering placement within the organisation, as a peer supporter to other job seekers, and/or supporting one of the other projects. Others are supported to find a volunteering opportunity elsewhere. The organisation makes use of the Volunteer Scotland database (Volunteer Development Scotland, 2010c) to find opportunities, as well as using personal contacts. Programme participants are encouraged to volunteer beyond their three week placement, and this is an outcome of the programme set by the DWP.

The DWP has set targets for the programme to move people onto employment (45%), further education (20%) and volunteering (20%). The organisation has to provide evidence of the development that participants have had, and details of their activities. The organisation has found that they have fallen short of the set targets as some of those referred:

“Do not turn up, some drop out, some are difficult to place in volunteering due to personal circumstances such as mental ill health or past convictions, and others complete the course and can demonstrate development, but are unable to find paid employment due to the lack of jobs”

Interviewee M

In addition to the structured programme, the organisation runs a Work Club and an Enterprise Club, both of which are self-funded, with equipment donated by local businesses. The two paid members of staff have responsibility for these services, and the directors and volunteers provide support. The services are provided on a drop-in basis, and individuals can receive guidance on applications and CVs, have mock interviews, and have their skills assessed through a journey log and individual personal development plan. Mentoring support is also provided through one-to-one sessions focusing on personal reflection and skills. Coaching is provided to help individuals with letter writing and managing job search documents:

“We try to get people to see their CV as a working document which they can develop as they go along. We think this can enhance their possibility of being invited for interview”

Interviewee L

The organisation previously provided clothing for interviews through private sector donations, but the cost of maintaining it was prohibitive and it ceased:

“Although the interview suits were donated by local companies, providing the service was costing us a lot in cleaning and storage, and so it was decided to stop that part of our service”

Interviewee M

Participants on the DWP-funded programme can access these other services provided by the organisation. In addition to these services, the organisation has a series of projects that course participants can get involved in. This includes an environmental project in partnership with a national organisation, including community asset development, a co-production project which brings communities in deprived areas together, and a prisons project which offers short-term offenders fixed-term opportunities to train in business and finance with a view to engaging them in social enterprise.

The organisation is considering becoming accredited to deliver SQA Awards such as VSkills for Employability (Volunteer Development Scotland, 2010d). Some participants have been able to use their logbook to achieve Access Level 3, with an option of Level 4/Intermediate 1 if they combine it with subject specific study (Scottish Qualifications Authority, 2010). The organisation's hands-on approach means that they spend a lot of time with programme participants, and therefore will provide a reference if needed.

Future developments include developing partnerships locally, working with the Local Authority to deliver activity agreements, and finding more sustainable forms of funding to secure their future.

5.8 Summary and Conclusions

This chapter has offered new insight into the role of volunteer-involving organisations as labour market intermediaries in their delivery of volunteering and employability programmes in Scotland. The cases were chosen to cover a range of geographies, organisation types and experiences. While the cases are different, covering mentoring, accreditation, life skills, social capital and more, there are issues arising from across the cases that are important to consider.

The role of volunteer-involving organisations as labour market intermediaries is one of responding to need, supporting people into and through volunteering as part of local partnership approaches. All of the cases are on some level responding to need. Some are directly responding to client approaches for support into work, recognising that there was a gap in provision. Others are responding to a need raised by Government, and have developed a service in response to that. In all cases, there are clear requirements for support for volunteering as a route to work. In order to meet this recognised need, there is evidence that organisations are offering a range of options in order to respond. All the programmes described in the cases have a structure, but the adherence to this varies, with most recognising the fluctuation of circumstances that can lead to client drop out.

The organisations view their roles in the labour market as being that of supporting people into volunteering with the exception of case six which is also responsible for supporting people into education or employment. Nevertheless, the organisations link to the local labour markets, and help volunteers select opportunities that will give them the skills

needed for the work they will want to apply for. In some cases, volunteers are started off with easy team-based volunteering to build their confidence, and give them experience, before they move on to career-specific experiences. Although partners offer specific careers advice, and the organisations refer on, there is evidence that the planning and learning logs are part of a process of career planning.

The organisations involved are all experts in their particular field, and they relate to the labour market alongside a wider set of organisations (statutory and otherwise) supporting employability. The majority are experts on volunteering, unsurprisingly, and so will refer on to partner organisations when issues arise that they are unqualified to deal with. The organisations do not work in a vacuum, and are referred on to by partners. In some cases, they also form part of strategic local employability partnerships which means they have input to area wide provision, and also are linked in to networks of expertise that they can use to the advantage of their clients.

The characteristics of volunteering and employability programmes vary, but have several commonalities. Typically, the programmes are focusing on improving employability, rather than achieving it, and as such, are measuring progress over time at the individual level in relation to skills and confidence gains, rather than employment gains. The journey to the labour market is complex, and although each of the cases has a defined pathway, they report that individual journeys are different, and as such, bespoke support is provided to help individuals reach their goals.

Each of the cases reports that a breadth of types of volunteering is undertaken to enhance employability. As such, there is no particular type of activity seen to be more likely to help employability. Some issues have arisen, however, in terms of accessing suitable opportunities that help individuals meet their career aspirations, for example within IT.

Funding is a key issue for organisations and the sources of funding vary. There is evidence that the funding received for volunteering and employability has improved the fortunes of the volunteer-involving organisations in relation to sustainability and the delivery of other services, as well as in allowing them to meet identified needs relating to moving into work. The funding available has supported the creation of new volunteering roles around employability, as well as sustaining paid jobs. In some cases, funding restricts the use of programmes and the timescales of interventions.

It is clear from across the cases that the volunteering and employability agenda has an impact on volunteering. From a positive view, it is increasing the spread of people involved, and encouraging those who have never been involved to give it a try. On the negative side, however, the number of volunteers wanting to volunteer for employability has an impact on volunteer-involvers in terms of what they can offer, but also in terms of sustainability, as many clients stop volunteering once they have found work.

The next chapter provides detail and analysis from the employers' interviews and survey. This chapter is organised thematically, with survey findings and quotations used throughout to highlight findings.

Chapter 6 – The Roles and Views of Employers

6.1 Introduction

This chapter discussed and analyses the data from employers, referring to pertinent research and policy throughout. This chapter is based on data from a survey of twenty-five employers, and in-depth interviews with ten of those employers.

6.2 Defining Volunteering and Distinguishing it From Paid Work

6.2.1 *Definitions of volunteering*

Researching volunteering, particularly in relation to measuring levels of involvement, has consistently found difficulty in getting participants to define themselves as volunteers, or to see particular activities as volunteering (Danson, 2003; Reilly, 2010). For example, when researching levels of volunteering quantitatively, the proportion of the population claiming to volunteer can vary by as much as ten percent, depending on the question asked, specifically whether the word volunteering is used in the question (Baird, 2003b). As a result, it was deemed important to set the scene of the interviews by understanding the interviewee's personal definition of volunteering, in order to give context to the answers given. This was the first question asked, and there were no prompts given.

Interviewees demonstrated a good understanding of the term volunteering. All respondents focused primarily on the unpaid nature of volunteering, either describing it directly as unpaid, or noting, amongst other characteristics, that there was no pay attached. Beyond this, participants focused on the potential beneficiaries of volunteering, either in a general sense in terms of it being of benefit to someone else, e.g. not the volunteer themselves, or in a specific sense, in terms of it being of benefit to community, society, schools or charities:

“Any activity done of your own choice and volition to the good of someone else. This can be experiential, or entertaining in an old folk’s home, a good cause. It is unpaid”

Interviewee EE

“Someone who is undertaking an activity on an unpaid basis, usually for the benefit of the wider community or society”

Interviewee AA

One interviewee, from a voluntary sector organisation, specifically noted that the beneficiary is not family, and that volunteering is an act of goodwill:

“Volunteering is not for payment, but for goodwill (I think people forget this), and for the benefit of community, not family”

Interviewee JJ

The first quote above raises the role of choice in volunteering. The individual chooses the activity, and there are reasons behind that choice. In the example, it might be a choice between seeking experience, and offering skills. Another interviewee talked about the sharing of skills and experience as being an element of volunteering:

“The giving of free time, giving your skills and expertise to charities or schools, people or organisations”

Interviewee FF

The following interviewees focused on the individual’s motivation to volunteer; for personal development, due to belief in a cause, or as an alternative to paid employment. This interviewee focused on volunteering as a means of personal development:

“Volunteering is something someone does as a choice, to develop themselves, for their own goals and needs”

Interviewee KK

Another interviewee, who had begun volunteering due to a life-changing personal experience, felt that commitment to a cause might drive someone to give their time unpaid:

“Volunteering is giving up time to help others. People volunteer because of belief or passion for a cause, that’s why they do it as a volunteer rather than paid”

Interviewee II

Further to this, another interviewee felt that volunteering is usually linked to a personal interest or a vocation, and may also be a way for an individual to fill time during unemployment, or to gain experience:

“Volunteering in my mind is unpaid work, usually from my experience you find that someone has a personal interest, so if they like animals for example, they might volunteer with animals, or they have a vocation of ‘I like to work with homeless people’, and they will go and do that. Some folk use it as a way of filling up time if they can’t get work, then they may be offering themselves up as a volunteer in terms of gaining valuable work experience to put on their CV, but I would say it’s unpaid I think is the difference”

Interviewee BB

Overall, interviewees covered a range of attributes when describing volunteers. These attributes echo those found in definitions of volunteering as discussed in detail in chapter two (e.g. Scottish Executive, 2004; Ellis Paine et al., 2010).

6.2.2 *The characteristics of volunteers*

Interviewees were asked subsequently about the characteristics of volunteers: specifically what kind of characteristics they would expect to see from someone who volunteers. Some reported on their own experiences of working with volunteers, while others described what they would expect from someone who volunteered.

In the case of a small voluntary sector organisation who had more volunteers than paid staff, they emphasised specifically the view that volunteers were trustworthy both in terms of responsibility and reliability:

“Someone you can trust. Someone you can trust to lock up at night, be here in the morning”

Interviewee CC

For a manager in a private sector organisation, volunteers demonstrated a range of positive attributes, and specifically demonstrate skills that are needed in his workforce:

“Volunteering demonstrates integrity and commitment, self-determination and values, strong and positive values. Volunteers tend to have an outgoing personality which is beneficial for the customer facing roles in the company”

Interviewee EE

Related to this, another interviewee noted that an individual's volunteering experience can demonstrate that they have particular characteristics:

“I would expect them to be an open person, a person willing to accept and bring fresh ideas”

Interviewee KK

Another interviewee agreed that understanding someone's volunteering role can help you understand their personal characteristics:

“The characteristics of a volunteer depend on what volunteering they have done, but it is important to be clear on the role and other specifics”

Interviewee DD

Similarly, for another interviewee, volunteering demonstrates many positive attributes, but also tells you something about the person:

“Volunteer characteristics include passion, belief, energy and enthusiasm, self-motivation. Volunteering show a bit about character, you can tell a lot if someone has volunteered”

Interviewee II

Similarly another interviewee felt that volunteers often had a story in terms of how and why they became involved, and that story told you something personal about them:

“Volunteering tends to give you a story about something personal or ethics when you see it”

Interviewee EE

It is notable that all the characteristics of volunteers mentioned were positive which is different from the debates in the literature about ‘lady bountiful’ and ‘do-gooders’ (Sheard, 1995).

6.2.3 *Distinguishing volunteering and paid work*

Survey respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement ‘aside from pay, there is no difference between volunteering and paid work’. Figure nineteen below shows that although the most commonly selected response was disagree, if strongly agree, and agree are taken together, the same number agree with the statement. This suggests that attitudes are mixed and the discussion of this issue in the interviews demonstrates that there are a number of factors that make this a complex issue.

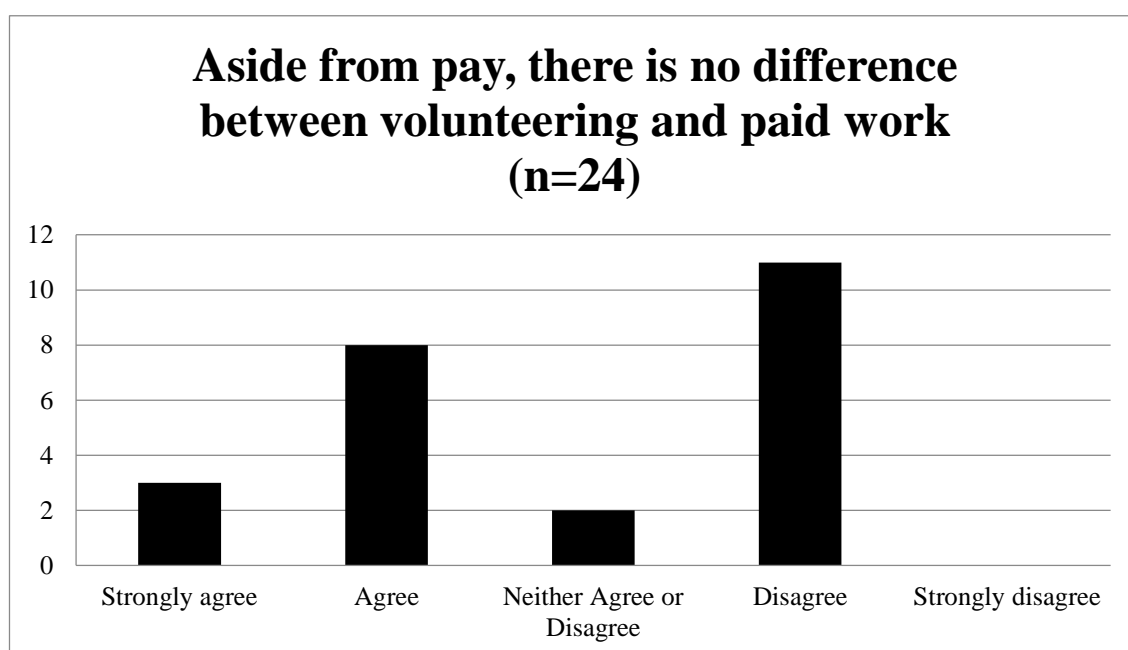


Figure 19: *Distinguishing volunteering from paid work*

Interviewees were asked to describe what differences they felt there were between volunteering and paid work, besides pay. Responses covered issues such as distinction from the day job, motivation, passion, bureaucracy, relationships and quality of work. Some used paid work as a way of distinguishing from how they viewed volunteering, as being something that wasn’t your day job, or, as being something you actively wanted to do, with the suggestion that some paid workers may not want to do the job they are in:

“It is different from paid work in that it is doing something that is not your day job, doing something you wouldn’t normally be able to do”

Interviewee FF

“Volunteers do it because they want to, workers may not want to be there”

Interviewee II

“I think there is more of an emphasis upon the role of the individual in terms of what they want to do, and there is also an element for me, in terms of the passion that the individual brings to the activity if they are willing to do it free of charge”

Interviewee AA

For an interviewee whose organisation had had people volunteering for work experience, they considered volunteering to be different in relation to organisational bureaucracy:

“It’s different from paid work because it takes out some of the bureaucracy of companies, for example we have a defined recruitment and referencing process, yet that would not need to be followed for volunteers, as there are minimal legislative constraints”

Interviewee KK

For a volunteer-involver, they saw the relationship between the organisation and a volunteer as different from the relationship between the organisation and a member of staff:

“Volunteering is a different relationship. People can come and go when they feel like it. We use the language of ‘task’ instead of ‘work’. There is no payment relationship which means there is no obligation”

Interviewee JJ

Another volunteer-involver saw the relationship differently in relation to responsibility and accountability:

“There are a lot more expectations on paid staff than on volunteers, for example responsibilities and requirements of posts. Volunteers do not have the same accountability as paid staff”

Interviewee DD

While another volunteer-involver reported that they expect a similar quality of work from volunteers as they do from paid staff:

“I think if someone was volunteering in my organisation, doing a job which would otherwise be done by a member of staff, or which was particularly outward facing, I would expect them to work to the same quality standard as my organisation would expect from anyone else”

Interviewee AA

Related to this, another volunteer-involver spoke about a recent shift in volunteering roles within their organisation to allow volunteers to lead on work. This was in response to demand from volunteers, and came about in order to help volunteers who were seeking work, gain additional skills for their CV:

“The organisation is doing more volunteer-led volunteering, it has shifted from a staff-in-charge model. We became aware that people were looking for these opportunities and that they were capable. Volunteers have taken more of a leading role, which gives them more responsibility and therefore more to say on their CV”

However, there had been some concern within the organisation about this shift and the impact it might have on the professional nature of the work:

“There was some trepidation about using volunteers to lead in relating to them being in charge, particularly in relation to reliability, but also in cases where we were generating income for the organisation. This was a conflict as [our field] is highly professional. We had concerns for consistency but some skills are not strictly [subject specific], and are good experience”

Interviewee JJ

For another organisation, although they have volunteers in their governance structure, they are not present elsewhere in the business. The interviewee described her understanding of previous examples of people working unpaid within the organisation to gain work experience:

“Mostly I would think if someone did negotiate a volunteering opportunity within our organisation, it’s mostly to do with adding to their CV, linked to their studies I would imagine. There has been a handful that I have known and it tends to be in our central teams in policy and HR and IT, in our kind of strategic teams, research, that type of thing that they have come, so there has probably been handfults over the years that have come and done that. Have we employed them? I don’t think they have asked to be employed”

The same interviewee raised some reservations about relying on people’s goodwill, particularly in relation to delivering services, which is distinct from the strategic roles detailed in the quote above where people have typically undertaken unpaid experience:

“You know I think it is quite hard, sometimes folks will ask us for work experience, can I come to volunteer to gain experience? It doesn’t sit comfortably with me, to do that unpaid, but I understand why someone would offer to come unpaid because they are adding to their CV. But as an organisation it’s a social business, I wouldn’t be happy over-relying on volunteers for the delivery of lots of our stuff”

Interviewee BB

6.2.4 Personal experiences of volunteering

Survey respondents were asked whether they currently volunteer, and whether they have volunteered in the past. Figure twenty below shows the combined data on current and past volunteering experience. This shows that many respondents are lapsed volunteers, but many volunteer now as well as having volunteered in the past. A small number have never volunteered:

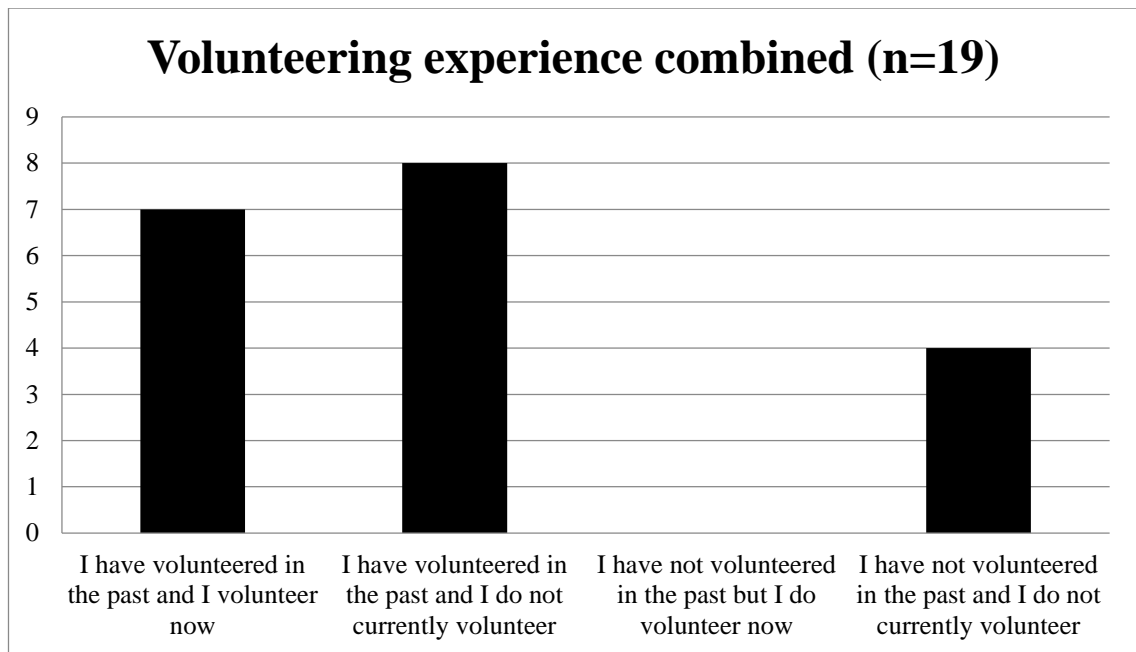


Figure 20: Volunteering experiences of survey respondents combined

Interviewees were asked to describe their personal experiences of volunteering in order to put their views in context. Research suggests that those who have volunteered may have a more positive attitude towards volunteering in others. Some of the interviewees from the third and public sectors reported personal volunteering experience, some current and some previous, generally during periods of education, with one experience of staff volunteering:

“I really got into volunteering for the first time during school and university, initially very sports focused, running badminton and tennis clubs at school and then at university community action, media and charity appeals”

Interviewee AA

In this example, the interviewee downplays their volunteering experience because they undertook it for their own benefit:

“I’ve only ever done it as a student, for my own benefit, so it’s not a great example. It wasn’t selfless by any means, but obviously you are volunteering to get experience in the area you are looking to get into work”

Interviewee HH

This interviewee describes volunteering undertaken through her employer as part of a staff volunteering initiative:

“I volunteered in the past linked to our organisation, so we’ve helped through, we have a staff volunteering policy, so our staff are permitted time within the working day, or given time off to go and volunteer as well. So my experience of volunteering has simply been with [this organisation], we’ve volunteered for Sports Relief for example, where I have manned the phones to help a big national event like that, I’ve volunteered my services for some of our third sector organisations who are delivering youth programmes”

Interviewee BB

The interviewees from private sector organisations reported personal and networking benefits from their volunteering, one current and one previous:

“I volunteer in two roles, in one related to my professional field which I do to give something back, in the other it is related to a personal experience. Volunteering has helped me personally in relation to networking, being made aware of available jobs and being invited to join other groups”

Interviewee II

“I volunteered when at University with inductions for new entrants and foreign students. I found it rewarding, it put me out of my comfort zone and it helped me to build connections”

Interviewee KK

All interviewees who have volunteered are positive about their volunteering experiences, which may have an impact on their views on volunteering by job applicants.

6.2.5 Encouraging others to volunteer

Related to personal experience of volunteering, interviewees were asked whether they encourage others to volunteer. Some talked about encouraging friends and family, others colleagues, and there was a theme that encouraging others to volunteer was a result of knowing that someone was in need of a particular experience, or particularly skilled for a role, or that a particular role was suitable. In this first example, the focus is on helping someone to try out something they are unsure about, or to gain basic skills so that they can access an area of interest:

“Yes, but usually in terms of trying to find them an experience that suits them, so very much from an employability perspective rather than anything else. Particularly if someone is quite passionate about a certain thing but doesn’t really know whether they are desperate to do it, or doesn’t have the skills for the first step to get into it”

Interviewee AA

In this example, the interviewee talks about encouraging a staff member in her team to volunteer in order to develop leadership skills and work with people who are unemployed:

“Yes, I have, particularly in the past as a manager within this organisation, then I’ve encouraged staff who work for me to do Prince’s Trust for example, where I’ve felt that that would maybe help their leadership skills, but there is paying something back, so that is an example of where they have went and worked in a Prince’s Trust programme, but been the only person in employment, and the other individuals have all been unemployed, and that mix together has helped them, but from my point of view it helps see what it’s like at the other side for people who are unemployed, but help them hone their own skills, so I’ve done that”

Interviewee BB

This interviewee had successfully gained work after volunteering for three months in her area of work for an organisation, and so encourages family and friends who need work experience to consider volunteering:

“I’ve got friends and family who are still students and are struggling, and I’ve always said to them”

Interviewee HH

For this interviewee, she encourages others where she thinks they have particular strengths to offer, and she promotes international volunteering because she had a positive experience:

“I encourage others to volunteer, but not avidly. I have suggested volunteering where people have strengths, for example counselling. A few years ago I volunteered out in Peru and I gained a lot from it, and therefore promote it to others”

Interviewee II

In this final example, the interviewee doesn't go out of his way to encourage others to volunteer, but would be supportive of anyone who wanted to:

"I don't encourage others to volunteer as I believe it is a personal choice, however, if someone close to me said they wanted to volunteer I would try to support them"

Interviewee KK

6.3 Volunteering and its Role in Recruitment, Retention and Promotion

6.3.1 Volunteer involvement

The survey asked whether organisations involved volunteers in their work. As figure twenty-one shows, the majority report that they do; however, a number selected 'neither agree or disagree' which may suggest that the respondent did not know, or that they were unsure of the status of any unpaid workers in their organisation. If we refer back to interviewee BB's comments on feeling uncomfortable involving volunteers in delivery, although volunteers were involved in governance, it may be the case that respondents were unsure whether this met the criteria of 'in our work'.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
We involve volunteers in our work	5	8	6	5	1

Figure 21: Employers' volunteer involvement

In the interviews, some of the organisations reported that they involve volunteers themselves, and are reliant on them to varying degrees for the delivery of services. As employers, they have direct experience of volunteers, including the need to provide support and training which can help volunteers become attractive to other employers, while in other cases employers reported examples where they had recruited volunteers directly into paid work.

This interviewee detailed the training and support provided to governance volunteers, and voiced an expectation that the volunteers might use this experience if they were seeking paid work:

“They [committee volunteers] all give their time up free, and they all volunteer to contribute to our organisation, and what we do is, we provide formal training for them, so we can provide ‘how to host a meeting’, ‘how to take a minute’, ‘how to use IT’, and I would absolutely expect that if they were going for a job, they would use these transferrable skills to say ‘well I volunteer in my [local committee of the organisation] and my role in this is this, I can participate in meetings, I can speak with confidence, I’ve been trained in using computers, and I’m knowledgeable in that’, and I would find it hard to see why someone wouldn’t take that into account”

Interviewee BB

For this small voluntary sector organisation, they had previously recruited volunteers into paid roles within their organisation, as it allowed them to see commitment prior to employment:

“Some of our paid staff were previously volunteers with us, they showed commitment to the organisation and to the cause. Recruiting directly saved us on the costs of recruitment and allowed us to see commitment”

Interviewee CC

For this employer, although they do not regularly recruit staff, there was a previous example where a volunteer had found paid work with the organisation:

“Staffing is fairly static, we recruited a communications officer two years ago, and one volunteer has had a job internally”

Interviewee JJ

For another organisation, they sometimes involve volunteers, but they don’t actively recruit them, instead finding that people wanting practical experience in their area of work approach them offering help in return for the chance to gain skills:

“We don’t actively seek out volunteers. Because of the nature of the work that we do people come and ask if they can do volunteering with us, sometimes because they are doing a relevant course such as Community Education, sometimes because they have a particular skill that they want to build up”

Interviewee AA

6.3.2 Staff volunteering

The survey asked whether employers encouraged staff to volunteer a) during paid work time, and b) in their own time. Figure twenty-two below shows the data from both questions and shows that more employers encourage staff to volunteer in their own time, than during paid work time, and that a number do not encourage staff to volunteer at all. Again, a number selected ‘neither agree or disagree’ to these questions which may suggest that they were unsure, or that they do not actively encourage staff to volunteer, but equally do not discourage it.

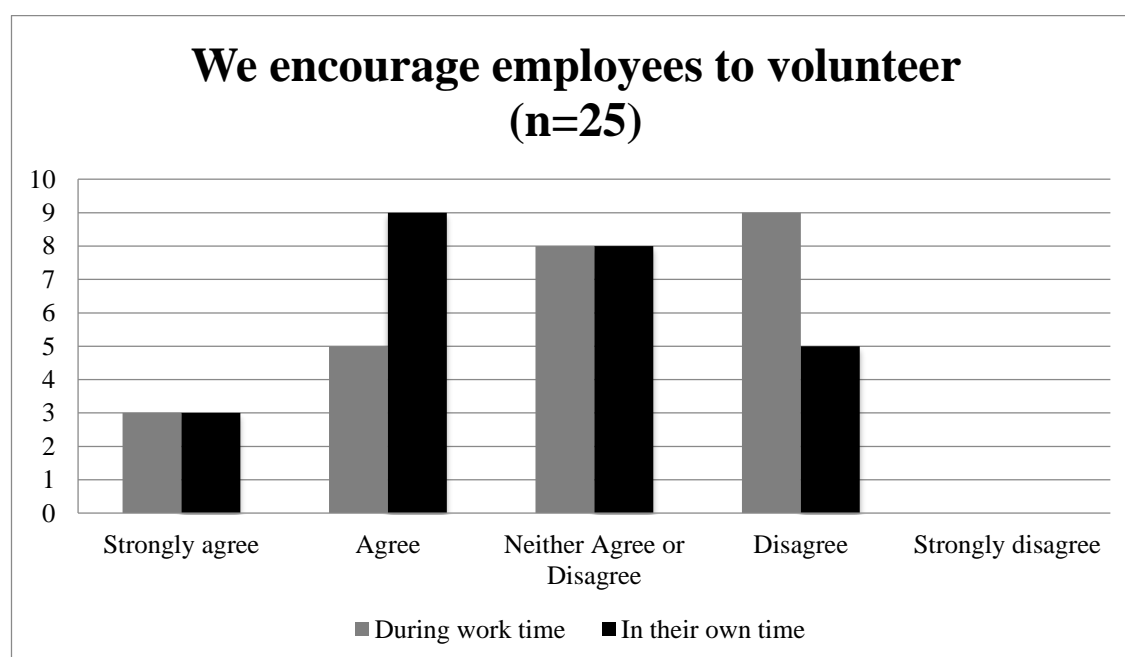


Figure 22: Employee volunteering

Organisations were asked at interview whether they supported staff to volunteer, and what forms this took. Three organisations have staff volunteering policies in place, and of these two supplied a copy of the policy to the researcher: organisation BB and organisation EE. Excerpts from the policies can be found in Appendix E. The contextual information supplied by the interviewees follow for organisations BB and EE respectively.

The interviewee reported that organisation BB developed their staff volunteering policy in 2010. Prior to the policy being developed, a question on volunteering had been added to the annual staff satisfaction survey – “have you volunteered in the past twelve months”? This was designed to capture volunteering that staff had done in work or personal time. The survey found that 20% of staff volunteered in the past twelve months. This finding informed the development of the staff volunteering policy.

From a strategic viewpoint, the interviewee explained that the scope and detail of the policy was subject to debate within the organisation, and it was decided that staff volunteering should support the communities in which the organisation works:

“We had a whole big debate about what went into this, as a business, as an organisation, I think, we have given examples of what we’d like, as an employer, to achieve through volunteering and some guidelines about what a recipient would benefit from us volunteering, and we had a talk about the fact that it would need to be in our communities”

Interviewee BB

A member of staff was tasked with taking this feedback on board, and writing the staff volunteering policy. They had contact with the local Volunteer Centre during the time the policy was being developed, and the policy has a section which describes its contribution to the local Single Outcome Agreement and Volunteering Framework.

Although it is not specified in the policy, the interviewee reported that managers are expected to keep records of staff involvement in volunteering and report the number of days given. The initial ambition related to staff volunteering is to increase participation to 25%. The policy is available to staff on the intranet, and was promoted to staff when it was first launched. The staff magazine regularly features stories and photographs of staff volunteering.

The interviewee felt that the policy could be viewed through two lenses: as a tool for managers, and also as a tool for staff. As a manager, it supports her to find ways of developing her team:

“Managers should make use of it yes, it’s a tool for me as a manager, it’s a tool for when I’m looking for building individuals and a team, that I would absolutely suggest that as a way of helping them expand, yes”

However, the promotion and easy availability of the policy to staff means that those staff who wanted to do volunteering activity through the policy could approach a manager without them having to lead on it:

“So it could come both ways, you could have a manager who is particularly primed on this, particularly keen and would do that encouragement, but if not, you can have, because it is an open document, so staff could then say well I’ve read this and I quite like that and they could raise it with their manager as part of that discussion”

Further to this, the interviewee describes how she uses the policy to facilitate team away days during work time, allowing the team to debate and decide on activities:

“Also, within my own team, we have debates about team volunteering, so we look for initiatives as a team, we might go and volunteer and the one we are debating just now is sort of an environmental clean-up around areas so we’ll build that into a team away day”

Related to this, she notes that the policy aim is to encourage staff to volunteer, not to force them to do so, and that the opportunity to volunteer during work time might make it easier for staff who do not have a lot of time to give:

“So a lot of it is personal drive for the individual, it’s not something that we would force folks to do, but it’s certainly something as an employer that we would encourage and point out the benefits of volunteering. For them as an individual and to the business. I think by encouraging it you are saying ‘you don’t need to do this in your own time’, maybe it helps some people, it does make a difference. So even other people’s personal situations that they have at home, they may not be able to give up their free time, so if we are able to say well you could use a day within your work week where you can go and volunteer, that helps facilitate that I think”

Interviewee BB

For organisation EE, the interviewee reported that the policy was introduced in January 2011 and forms part of the organisation's Good Business/Corporate Social Responsibility approach. The background is that a staff engagement survey has taken place for the past four or five years, which has measured whether staff are proud to work for the company, and how they engage with the local communities in which they operate. It was found that levels of community engagement depended upon the commitment of local managers, and so it was decided to implement a policy in order that staff could engage without it needing the local manager to lead:

“Community involvement is dependent upon the store manager and will vary. The policy aimed to engage colleagues without it needing the store manager to drive it”

The interviewee then explained that there are quarterly area meetings for staff representatives where staff are updated on business matters as well as fundraising progress for their partner charity. The volunteering policy was rolled out from this forum. The level of uptake is not currently actively measured but the payroll system will have a record of days used. The policy could be used for individual or team volunteering, including fundraising and events to benefit the charity partner. At a local level, some teams work with local schools, and the policy could be used to allow this to take place in work time:

“The organisation doesn't promote staff volunteering in their own time, but we do take a healthy interest in staff and will support individual or group volunteering as per the policy. Volunteering is good for colleagues in the current environment and encourages a community workplace”

Staff are expected to apply for time off to volunteer, and the time allocated has to suit the needs of the business. There also cannot be a conflict of interest between the activity and the business, and any activity should take place within the operating locations of the business. The process was explained in further detail:

“In order for a staff member to take advantage of the volunteering policy they need to apply to their manager. Like annual leave, the time off has to suit the needs of the business, for example, during Christmas wouldn't be allowed. There needs to not be a conflict of interest in relation to company PR, or politics and it should be a positive and

fruitful experience. The policy sits alongside the Equal Opportunities Policy. It is expected that some London staff might use it to get involved in the Olympics”

Interviewee EE

Organisation FF reported having a staff volunteering policy but did not supply a copy to the researcher. The interviewee explained that the organisation encourages staff to volunteer, and that this relates to the organisation’s Corporate Social Responsibility agenda. The policy states that staff can apply for up to six days per annum to volunteer with organisations supported by the business. The process is explained in further detail:

“There are usually guidance notes for staff in relation to policy. The policies aren’t very long but are regularly promoted and are available on the staff intranet. If a staff volunteering activity is planned it will be supported, but notice is needed”

The interviewee then reported that the business also provides additional support to organisations and co-ordinates volunteering activity at local, national and global levels. The organisation uses its financial and staff resources to support local communities, through delivering programmes including supporting local schools, planting trees, and cleaning up the local environment. Staff are encouraged to take part in team volunteering in order that they can work with colleagues and apply their skills to different environments. Staff learning from volunteering is important to the business, as is teambuilding, and the chance to use work-related skills in a different context:

“Staff are encouraged to get involved as the company has found that people get a lot out of it, working on volunteering activity as teams allows them to see colleagues differently and put something back”

Flexible working is available for staff who are already involved in volunteering outwith work time. Staff who are involved in charity fundraising in their own time can apply for matched funding for any money they raise. The interviewee reported that some staff do not share this information with the company as they see it as a private activity; however, the opportunity to have support from the organisation is promoted to staff through a range of communication channels:

“If staff have existing volunteering commitments, they are encouraged to share this. Flexible working is available, and there is match funding available for people involved in their own fundraising”

Interviewee FF

The three organisations with volunteering policies allow staff to volunteer in work time, subject to organisational agreement. All organisations recognise the benefits of volunteering in company time to the individual staff, the business, and the communities they serve. Although the organisations promote the policies directly to staff in order that they can access it without their line manager promoting it, in each case, the activity undertaken and time given is subject to line manager approval. This will be discussed more fully later in the thesis.

Although this private sector organisation does not have a volunteering policy, the interviewee negotiated time off for volunteering when she started with the company and suggests that others could potentially do the same:

“The organisation does not have a policy for staff to volunteer during work time, but I arranged to have Monday afternoons off for my volunteering when I was recruited so it can be negotiated individually”

Interviewee II

In another private sector organisation with no formal support for volunteering, line manager's support volunteering informally:

“Line managers would like staff to volunteer out with the workplace and will informally help staff to do this. The goals are recorded on your PDP and at year-end review. For example, my immediate manager has seen that I would like to go into coaching, and is going to discuss me coaching a local school's team at the next PTA meeting. There is no organised volunteering for staff, staff requests to volunteer during work time could be dealt with on a case-by-case basis, taking into account business needs”

Interviewee KK

In contrast, these two public sector organisations do not actively promote volunteering amongst staff:

“I think the type of organisation we are, most of our departments, managers and what have you have quite a lot of pressure, and I think if someone is off doing Scout volunteering at the weekend, or whatever it might be, that’s great but I wouldn’t have said it was something that we would actively be going out and promoting”

Interviewee HH

“We have a Volunteering Policy and have achieved IiV but this is for befrienders and advocacy volunteers, not staff. Staff aren’t overly encouraged to volunteer, although it would not be discouraged”

Interviewee DD

The voluntary sector organisations interviewed, all of whom have twelve staff or less, reported that they do not have formal policies for the support of staff volunteering. In one case it is not encouraged for specific operational reasons, in another for practical reasons, and in a third, it is encouraged, but not formally.

The interviewee from organisation AA reported that owing to the nature of their role in the community they didn’t encourage staff to volunteer locally due to the potential conflict of interest:

“We don’t really have anything. The main reason is because of the type of work we do, we don’t encourage staff to become involved in local organisations. Most of our staff volunteer anyway, but it’s not employer encouraged”

However, the interviewee went on to report that there was team volunteering during work time on an annual basis:

“The only staff volunteering we do is once a year we try to do something good-causey as an organisation. That is part of work time. It’s in work time, it’s planned by work so it’s Employer Supported Volunteering. It’s not compulsory, although everyone takes part”

Interviewee AA

For organisation CC, they note a lack of capacity to support staff to volunteer in or outwith work time, but report that their staff volunteer additional time to their organisation:

“Staff volunteer additional time to the organisation over and above their working hours”

Interviewee CC

This voluntary sector organisation encourages staff to volunteer on their own terms and in their own time:

“Staff are encouraged to volunteer but it is up to them what they want to do, for example reading to old people, coaching sports, befriending, chairing an environmental group. There is no team volunteering arranged by the organisation”

Interviewee JJ

The experiences of the voluntary sector organisation raise an important distinction between the promotion of individual volunteering and the promotion of team volunteering. For example, employer AA promotes team volunteering annually during work time but not individual volunteering, while in contrast, employer JJ encourages volunteering outwith work.

Employer CC raises a tangential issue of staff volunteering additional time to an employer over and above contracted hours. This may not be seen as volunteering under some definitions as it relates to paid work, however it is an important issue in relation to employers supporting staff to volunteer. In the case of Employer CC, staff numbers are low due to low funding availability which means that the work cannot be done in paid time. As a result, as well as involving volunteers in their work, the Directors and other paid staff give time above and beyond their contracted hours. This raises issues relating to an individuals' choice to volunteer, and this practice is not supported within ESV guidance (Lukka, 2000; CEV, 2009).

6.3.3 Recruitment policy and practice

The interviewees were asked to describe their typical recruitment processes. Full details from each of the ten interviewees are provided in figure twenty-three below. The majority of employers use an application form/CV and interview as a two-stage process of recruitment, which research suggests is common practice (Devins and Hogarth, 2005). Interviews were described by some employers as competency-based with scoring, while

others did not specify. Two organisations, FF and KK, both in the private sector, had more in-depth processes that involved assessment centres and multiple interviews.

There are some exceptions to the processes in the table, and these are specified in the footnotes, but typically apply to specific types of recruitment, e.g. apprentices and the long-term unemployed where the process is less formal than for mainstream recruitment. The interviewees representing these organisations gave a sense that volunteering would be viewed positively by these applicants, particularly in the light that the individuals may have less formal work experience to discuss at interview.

Employer	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5	Stage 6
AA	Application form	Interview (competency)	Job Offer			
BB	Application form ¹⁴	Interview	Job Offer			
CC	CV	Interview	Job Offer			
DD	Application form	Interview	Job Offer			
EE	Online application system/JCP ¹⁵	Interview	Job Offer			
FF	Application form	Online Assessment	1 st Interview	Assessment Day	Final Interview	Job Offer
HH	Application form	Interview (scoring matrix)	Job offer			
II	Application form/CV	Interview	Job Offer			
JJ	Application form	Interview	Job Offer			
KK	Online application system	Telephone interview	Assessment centre (customer-facing roles)	Interview (competency)	Job Offer	

Figure 23: Employers' recruitment processes

¹⁴ For Modern Apprentices, they submit a CV rather than an application form, then attend a group selection process, and are then interviewed by a manager, before being offered a place.

¹⁵ The organisation has a national agreement with Job Centre Plus to recruit through them, and temporary staff are recruited using a short paper application form

Figure twenty-four captures the questions from the job application forms provided to the researcher where volunteering is relevant. Employer AA explicitly prompts candidates to include volunteering experience. Employers BB, DD and HH have questions on skills and experience in their application forms, and although they do not prompt applicants to detail any volunteering experience, they noted in interview that they expected that any relevant experience of volunteering would be provided in answer to these questions.

Employer	Questions where volunteering is relevant
AA	<p>Qu2: “List previous employment and any relevant voluntary work, starting with the most recent”</p> <p>Qu5: “Full details of the post have been provided in the job description and person specification. Please address each point in the person specification IN TURN and provide EVIDENCE of how your experience, skill and training (at work or in a personal or voluntary capacity) relate to our requirements”</p>
BB	Part H: “Please describe your interest in this role and the experience and skills that you are able to bring to it”
DD/HH ¹⁶	Part C: “Please tell us your personal qualities, skills and attributes, experience and any major achievements and show how they match those needed for this job”

Figure 24: Interview questions where volunteering is relevant

The survey asked respondents whether they encouraged job applicants to include volunteering on their job applications, whether they encouraged applicants to discuss their volunteering experience at interview, and conversely, whether volunteering was irrelevant when they considered job applications. Figure twenty-five below demonstrates that the majority of organisations encourage job applicants to both include volunteering experience in their application, and to discuss their volunteering experiences at interview:

¹⁶ Both organisations are in the same field and the same application paperwork is used across the field

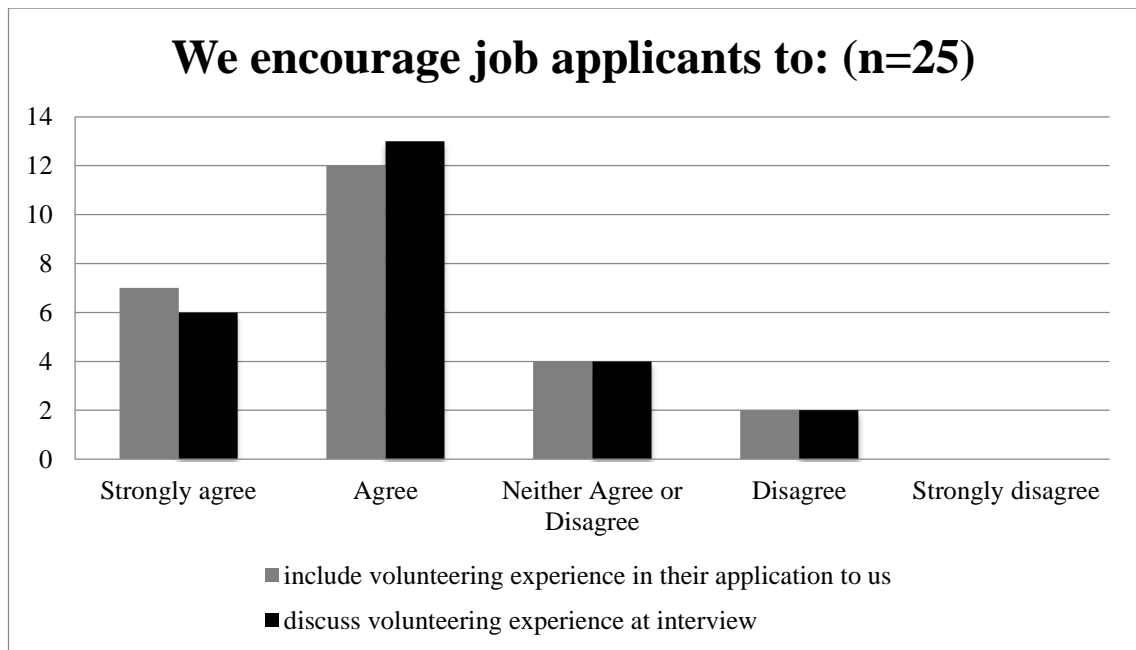


Figure 25: Employers' practice in seeking volunteering in the recruitment process

Related to this, a survey question was asked on whether “volunteering experience is irrelevant to us when we consider job applications”. The majority of employers disagreed, suggesting that it was relevant.

Interviewees were asked whether volunteering featured in their recruitment policies and practices. Voluntary sector employers actively seek volunteering when recruiting new staff, and explain their reasons for this as being a result of the type of work they do, and their voluntary ethos. For the public and private sector employers, the experience is more mixed.

Working in the voluntary sector means that this employer seeks someone who can demonstrate a passion for their community:

“There is something as well, particularly in our sector, that we look for people who have a passion about their community and a passion for the third sector, and volunteering tends to demonstrate that”

Interviewee AA

As a result, in their recruitment process, they actively request applicants to include volunteering activity in both their previous job history, and when describing competences:

“It’s in the application process twice. Once under the previous job history, we ask people to include volunteering activities as relevant to the position, and secondly in the competency section, we specifically include, we ask people to demonstrate competencies and we say that experience may come from either work experience, or volunteering, or their personal life”

Also, when it comes to assessing competences, they don’t distinguish between paid and unpaid experiences:

“We use a competency based approach, so the competency is assessed and whether the competency is based upon their volunteering or work base isn’t taken into account”

Interviewee AA

Similarly, in this voluntary sector organisation, a volunteering ethos is actively sought:

“The organisation has a volunteering ethos and so it is looked for in recruitment...In some ways this is pre-dated as the organisation was volunteer-led and has maintained that ethos”

Interviewee JJ

For the three public sector organisations, none of them actively seeks volunteering in the recruitment process. However, if candidates include volunteering experiences on application forms, or discuss volunteering when answering questions at interview, it will be considered. Nevertheless, the weight at which it will be taken into account can depend upon the preferences of the individuals on the interview panel, and on whether the volunteering has been undertaken in place of paid experience in the field.

For example, in organisation BB, the interviewee takes it into account, but recognises that other managers recruiting may focus on other characteristics and experiences:

“Absolutely we do, personally I do, some of it might be up to an individual managers’ perception, I would expect, but then the same can go for educational attainment as well, and previous work record, you know, but my view is very much not to focus on the educational attainment, I’m interested in the individual, the hearts and minds and the enthusiasm to want to work for our business”

The organisational recruitment process asks candidates to give examples of experiences, and the interviewee has experienced people using volunteering examples where they do not have paid experience:

“I found that if I ask someone, and we are very focused on examples, you know, I’m not looking for someone to give me a theory on something, and all of the managers I would happily say will coach and encourage and ask for real life examples, and lots of candidates from my experience have used volunteering as a way of saying ‘well I haven’t done any work experience in that, however in my capacity of volunteering in this organisation I have gained experience in that’”

Interviewee BB

Similarly, interviewee DD notes that, although their application forms do not seek volunteering, discussion will take place at interview to find out individuals’ experiences:

“There is no space on the application forms to place volunteering, but for some posts, discussion will be encouraged at interview to find out what people have done”

Related to this, the interviewee recognises that there will be applicants who have been unable to gain paid experience in the field, and therefore an interview panel will ask about unpaid experiences:

“Volunteering is not in recruitment policies but some posts are likely to have applicants who have volunteered in order to improve their employability, particularly where they have been unable to secure paid employment due to the competitive nature of the field, for example Assistant Psychologists, Occupational Therapists. In these cases, the panel would ask about unpaid experiences”

Interviewee DD

For another public sector interviewee, volunteering is viewed as a form of experience that can be used on an application form:

“When it [application form] talks about experience, we would expect if they had volunteering experience, it goes in there”

At the interview, whether or not volunteering was discussed would depend upon whether the candidate had included it in their application:

“I think there would just be a general question around their experiences, their previous experience, I wouldn’t have thought we would be specifically looking for them to talk about any volunteering experience. It’s more about if they have had such experiences, then absolutely bring it forward at interview and discuss that, and it will be taken into account along with everything else”

Interviewee HH

For the four private sector organisations, one encourages applicants to detail volunteering experience, while the other three do not. Although they do not all seek volunteering experience in the recruitment process, if a candidate details it, they will take it into account and discuss it at interview. It is notable that, for one employer, they view volunteering as a way to show willingness to work during gaps on their CV, while for another, if a person has been volunteering they do not see it as a gap on their CV.

Organisation KK encourages applicants to include volunteering experiences when describing their skills:

“There is a standard application form, it’s general and mentions skills gained through employment, education, voluntary and other methods”

The interviewee then explains that successful applicants will be asked to a competency based interview, and that volunteering experiences will be taken into account if candidates use them to demonstrate competences:

“Competency based interview, and your CV or application form would be discussed as you have said you demonstrate the skills for the role. Due to the nature of the competency based interview you will be asked about these, for example, “think about a time when you developed a team” might be answered through volunteering”

Relating to volunteering being present on a CV in place of paid work, or to fill a gap, the interviewee explains that they do not see it as a gap if someone has volunteered while unemployed, and that a reference from volunteering holds weight:

“It’s not a gap on the CV if someone has volunteering on [sic]. We have specific procedures for dealing with volunteering; for example, we can obtain a volunteer’s reference to show that the person was working there, and that is more acceptable than a gap or a personal reference from a friend”

Interviewee KK

Organisation EE reports that although volunteering is not in their recruitment policies or process, they will take into account any experience that is brought up by the candidate:

“Volunteering is not in recruitment policies and there are no questions in the recruitment process, but if the individual offered it up it would be taken into account. It’s up to the applicant to describe the relevant experiences. The information on the application form will be discussed at interview and so again, if it is included it will be discussed. For example, experience of running a charity shop would be taken into account, but the pace is different to a retail store, and so they might be brought in and skilled up. Experience that was directly relevant wouldn’t be discounted”

So, although it is not sought, volunteering is viewed as a positive thing for someone to have on their CV, and it particularly demonstrates a willingness and ability to work where they have had time away from work on their CV:

“The company doesn’t measure if people have volunteered in the recruitment process but it comes up and it is good for an individual to have in their toolkit. If individuals have an extended period away from work in their CV, then they will be asked about it. If they have been volunteering this demonstrates a desire to work and industrial capability”

Interviewee EE

For another private sector interviewee, although volunteering is not sought in the recruitment process, if it is shared by a candidate during recruitment it can provide a way of evidencing skills:

“Volunteering is not specifically looked for in recruitment, it’s not a brownie point if you do it. Skills can be evidenced through volunteering but it doesn’t matter where it has come from...It’s not looked for, but if it is shared then it is explored. People are sought who have developed skills and there is no ranking of how they got those skills”

Interviewee FF

This is similar to another private sector organisation, who will not ask for volunteering experience but will take it into account if a candidate raises it on their CV:

“Volunteering is not mentioned in policies around recruitment, but it will be taken into account at interview. It is not mentioned in job adverts, person specifications or application forms. The person should have volunteering on their CV so it can be discussed at interview, but generally applicants wouldn’t be asked if they did any volunteering”

Interviewee II

This feedback suggests, with the exception of the voluntary sector organisations, quite an ambivalent approach to volunteering in the recruitment process. This will be discussed in more detail in the discussion chapter.

6.3.4 *The relative value of skills and experiences*

Survey respondents were asked their level of agreement or disagreement to whether volunteering is valued equally to paid work in their recruitment process. The majority of respondents agree or strongly agreed with the statement as can be seen in figure twenty-six below. There is agreement and disagreement with the statement from all three sectors.

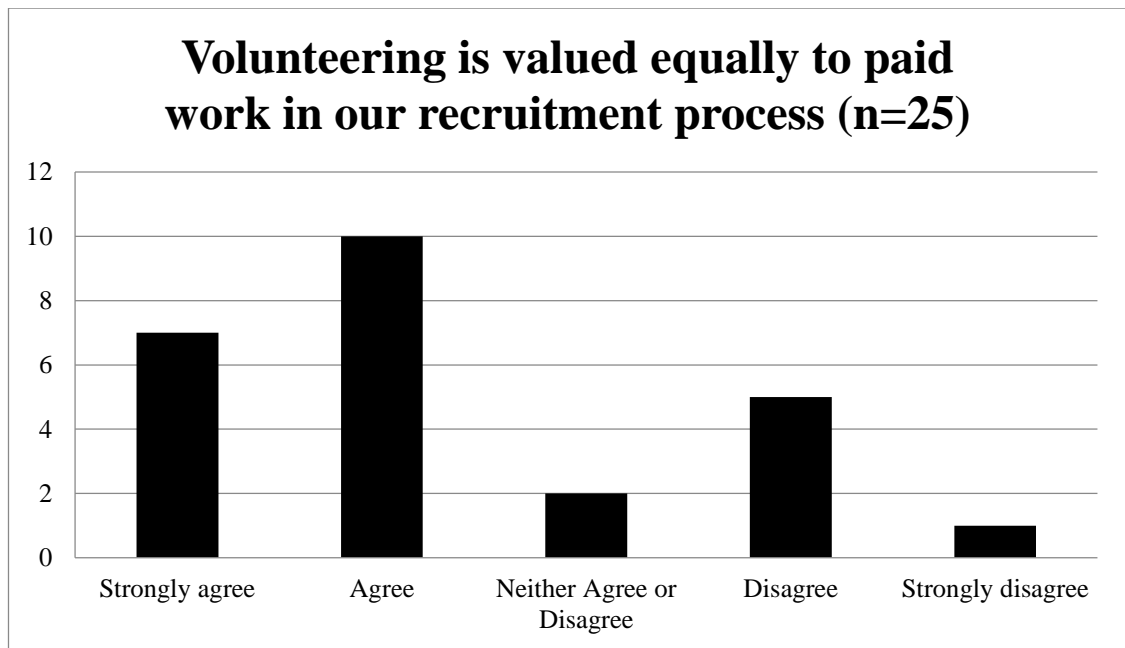


Figure 26: The value of volunteering in the recruitment process

Figure twenty-seven below shows data from two survey questions: whether the skills gained, and the experience gained through volunteering are valuable in the workplace. There is almost universal agreement that both are valuable:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The skills gained through volunteering are valuable in the workplace	11	12	1	0	0
The experienced gained through volunteering is valuable in the workplace	11	13	0	0	0

Figure 27: Valuing the skills and experience gained through volunteering

Respondents were also asked whether they agreed that job applicants with volunteering experience were no different to those without volunteering experience. As figure twenty-

eight shows, opinion was divided with many disagreeing with the statement, while a smaller number agreed. A number of respondents selected ‘neither agree or disagree’.

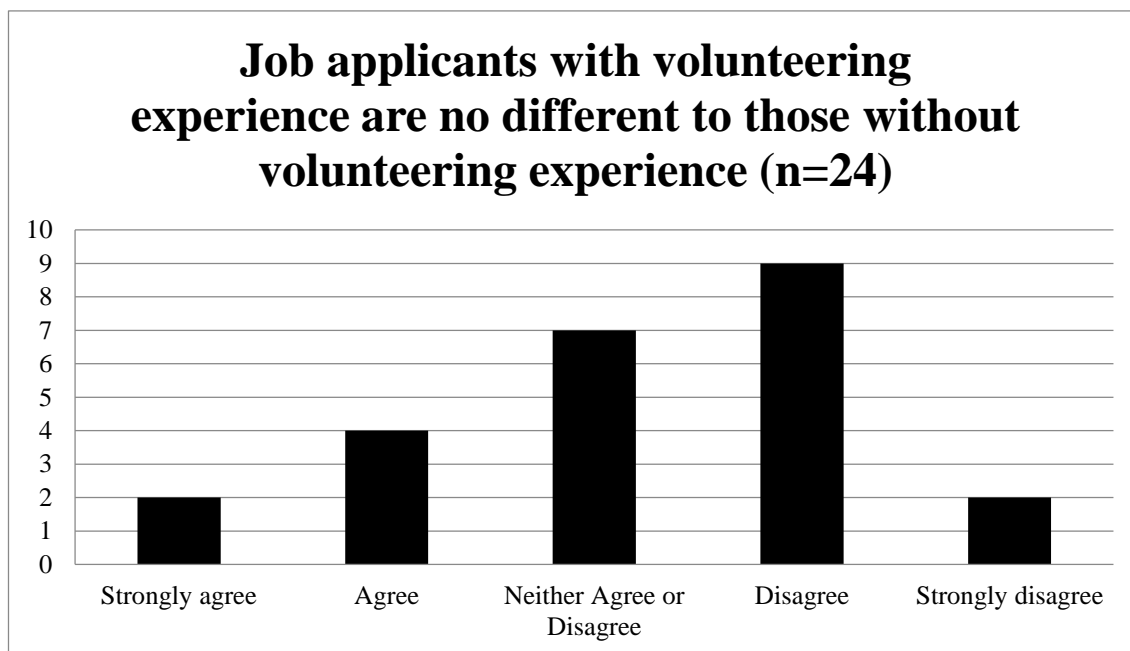


Figure 28: Valuing job applicants with volunteering experience

The interviews asked in more detail how volunteering might be regarded in relation to other types of experiences or qualifications. Views were mixed in relation to how volunteering is viewed, with some employers reporting that it held the same weight as other experiences, and others reporting that it held greater or less weight.

The voluntary sector organisation, AA, values volunteering equally to other experiences, and explains how it relates to qualifications:

“Comparing to experience is easy, it’s the same level, the time spent volunteering is regarded as experience. Regarding qualifications, it depends on the nature of the post. We usually in our recruitment seek someone who has a qualification or equivalent experience, and broadly speaking we look for the experience to be roughly two to three times the length of time it would take you to get the qualification. So if we are asking for a degree, we might be looking for someone who had done five to ten year’s equivalent work to have picked up the same level of knowledge. That’s irrelevant of whether it is volunteering or employment based”

They explain the difficulty in separating skills from experience:

“It’s always very difficult to divide them, particularly in the recruitment process. I think skills are more important than experience. It’s very easy to find people who have done things but it’s about how they turn the experience into demonstrating that they have the skills and particularly as part of an ordinary recruitment process where you are not actually measuring someone’s skills, you are measuring their ability to demonstrate that they have them and that’s where the experience comes through”

Interviewee AA

Referring back to the recruitment process of this organisation, they actively seek volunteering as a means of demonstrating both work history and competences, and therefore it is perhaps no surprise that they value it equally as a result.

In terms of public sector organisations, there is a focus on the whole person, in terms of volunteering enhancing, or being a replacement for other skills and experiences. For example, interviewee DD notes that if someone hasn’t been able to get paid experience, volunteering is a suitable substitute as long as the necessary qualifications are held:

“If someone was applying to be an Assistant Psychologist for example but hadn’t been able to find paid work, and so had volunteered, then their experience would count as useful and relevant. The qualification would be needed alongside this. Volunteering would therefore help an individual in the recruitment for an in-demand job if they hadn’t got paid experience. Volunteering experience would be expected to show both skills gained and experience”

Interviewee DD

For another public sector organisation, they view volunteering as relating to the whole person, and volunteering adds to their work history and education:

“It’s all very good, I think volunteering is an excellent thing to do, if it is more related to the work you want to do even better. You need to take a whole person, you are not going to take someone to interview and look at their work history and education history, you need to see the whole person and if they have done something like that I can only see it as a positive”

Interviewee HH

This interviewee works in an organisation where staff are regularly speaking to people, and therefore applicants have to demonstrate an ability to communicate. As such, volunteering is viewed by the interviewee as being a better way of demonstrating that type of ability than a qualification:

“I probably deem volunteering stronger than qualifications, and it’s the same with work experience, someone can study the theory of something, but if they have no practical experience of the delivery then you have only got them to a certain level. Volunteering can give them a practical sense of delivery, and again that may be different for different organisations but ours is a people focused organisation, we can’t go anywhere without talking to our communities, from there, so if someone has been at school or at university, and studied things, that is of value, it is absolutely of value to them, but I need to know how do you speak to somebody, how do you communicate with them, how do you translate what is a policy into something that is real, that somebody can understand, and so an individual, if I was interviewing and I was asking for examples, and they said ‘well I volunteer on this, and I deliver to local people’ or ‘I communicate with vulnerable folk’, I would see that as more value”

Interviewee BB

Related to this, the interviewee suggests that it is important that where individuals are getting support to prepare for the job application process, people who volunteer need to be made aware of the need to value their volunteering and be clear on the transferrable gains made:

“I think somebody who is volunteering, it’s guiding them to be aware of the value of that, so whoever is supporting the volunteers coming into a work environment, or to an interview, maybe there is a wee bit of a nudge that says ‘these are transferrable skills and make sure you mention that’”

Interviewee BB

For private sector organisations, volunteering is valued as a way of demonstrating skills, and it is most likely to be used as a way of differentiating between otherwise equal candidates.

For example, interviewee EE explains that the capability is important rather than whether you were paid:

“Recruitment is based on capability, whether experience has been paid or unpaid is immaterial. For example, a school leaver might have been head boy or involved in sports but it’s the quality that allows them to brag about aptitudes”

They then specified that requirements vary depending upon the level of the role being recruited for; for example, for senior roles, experience is more important than qualifications:

“In terms of recruiting store managers, the further up the company you are, the less important qualifications are, and the more it is about experience”

However, volunteering can be a means of differentiating between candidates:

“Volunteering might give an individual the edge, for example, if they demonstrate customer skills and personality. It might be a differentiator between two otherwise equal candidates”

Interviewee EE

This is similar for interviewee KK, who notes that volunteering is considered after paid employment and education experience, but that it can help them differentiate in relation to essential and desirable qualities:

“It [volunteering] is considered, but skills gained through employment are seen as the most important, then education, then volunteering. However, volunteering can be used as the deciding factor when looking at desirable and essential qualities, mostly towards desirable”

Furthermore, it can help differentiate between two otherwise equal candidates:

“We will acknowledge volunteering experience and would use it as a deciding factor if two candidates were equal on an employment basis”

Interviewee KK

It is interesting to note that interviewee EE makes the distinction that experience is more important than qualifications in more senior roles. Interviewee KK did not make such a distinction, but noted the role that volunteering could play in distinguishing between two otherwise equal candidates.

6.3.5 *Examples of volunteering enhancing employability*

Survey respondents were asked whether they agreed that volunteering experience can have a positive impact on an individual's career prospects. As figure twenty-nine shows, all respondents agreed:

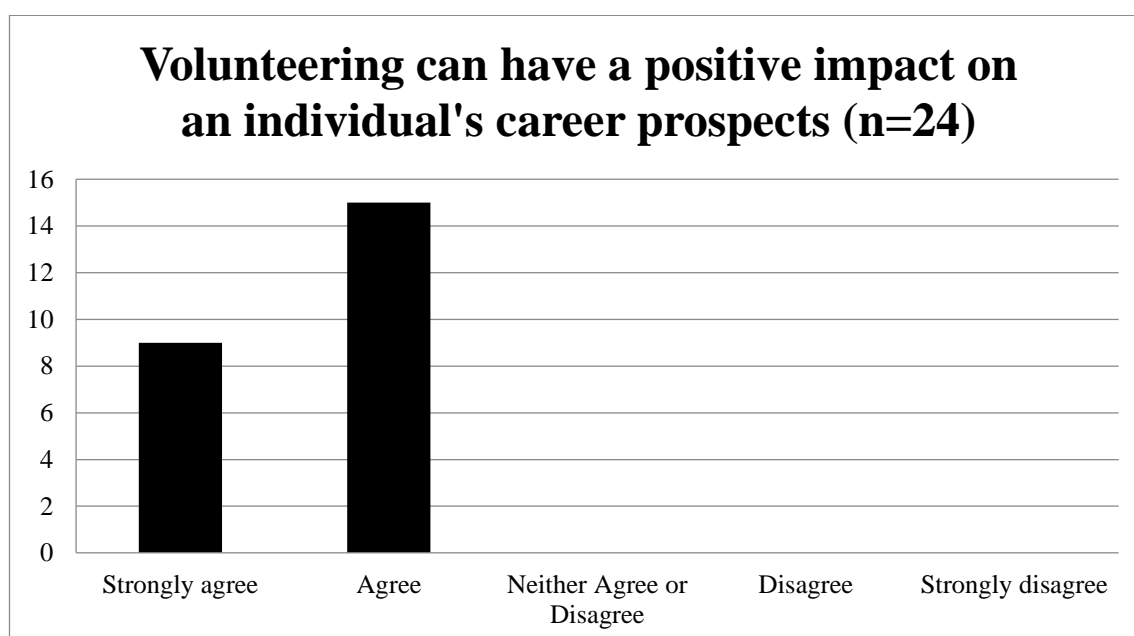


Figure 29: Volunteering and career prospects

Although information was captured in the recruitment policies and processes of interviewees, a supplementary question was asked regarding any particular experiences that interviewees had had of volunteering arising in their recent recruitment experience. Four interviewees gave examples of candidates who had discussed volunteering experience at interview, including two successful candidates who had demonstrated commitment through their volunteering.

In this first example, the interviewee notes that although there is no recent experience of someone having an advantage in the recruitment process due to volunteering, there was a recent candidate who was able to demonstrate particular qualities by discussing their Scout Leader experiences:

“There is no particular example of someone having an advantage in the recruitment process through volunteering...There was one interviewee who had been a scout leader and that became a conversation at interview, it disclosed his value system and exposed leadership qualities, ability to be calm, dealing with children, social skills and other natural traits”

Interviewee EE

In another example, the interviewee was aware that some volunteers had been successful in gaining paid posts within the organisation:

“There have been some Assistant Psychologists recruited who had volunteered in learning difficulty facilities”

Interviewee DD

Another employer gave two examples; one of someone who had approached the organisation for unpaid work experience and had then gone on to be successful in gaining a post, and another of someone who had demonstrated commitment to their chosen career through volunteering to enhance their educational qualifications:

“Yes, we had someone who worked one day per week for thirteen weeks to gain experience unpaid; this helped them gain a crucial insight into how to succeed at an assessment centre. Another member of staff was recruited based on a thirteen week period of volunteering at a golf club; this was important as they had the educational skills, but the experience was not as strong, and this demonstrated a drive and a want to gain practical skills which was not shown by other candidates”

Interviewee KK

This example is where someone who had volunteered within the organisation had got a job within the organisation. As they were involved in governance, this had been challenging, and the interviewee noted that it was unlikely to be a regular occurrence:

“Yeah, we had one last week where we have taken someone who was on our committee, it’s quite a challenge because actually, because of our governance rules then they have to stand down from the committee because there is a conflict there. Lots of our committee members are mostly retired, which I think is true of most [of our type of organisation] in

that sense, some of the younger ones who were keen to get on our programme I would consider, and they are eligible to apply as this lady did last week. But it's unusual I would say, it's not as if I've got an army of volunteers in here who I would look as potential future employees"

Interviewee BB

Further to this, one voluntary sector organisation noted that although they had no specific examples, because of their role in the local community, it would be unlikely that any new recruits would not have had experience of volunteering and/or the voluntary sector:

"It's only because our partner organisations is [sic] every voluntary organisation in [the local area] so the chances of someone coming to us wanting to work in the field that we do, without having previous experience with a voluntary organisation locally, is slim"

Interviewee AA

6.3.6 *The role of volunteering in career development and promotion*

Literature on volunteering in relation to employability typically focuses on routes into work rather than on potential career development. In order to consider this, survey respondents were asked whether they felt that volunteering can have a positive effect on an individual's career progression. As figure thirty shows, the majority of respondents agreed that it could.

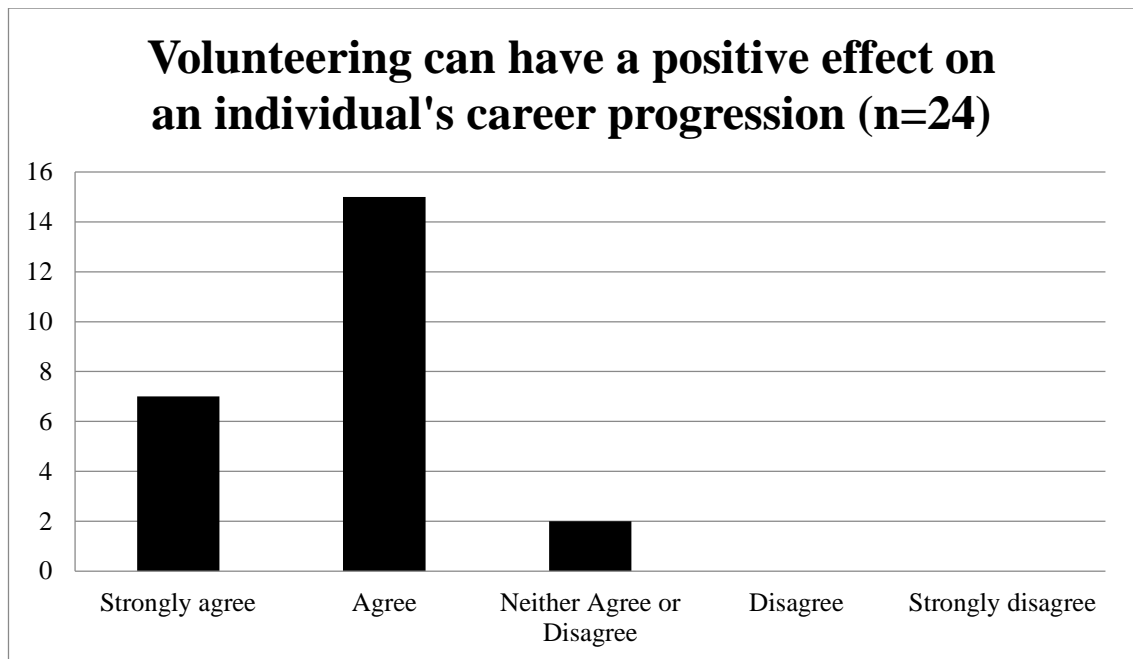


Figure 30: Volunteering and career progression

Within the interviews, feedback was mixed. For some it would make no difference, for others it may help with the development of relevant skills, or may show enthusiasm towards personal development.

For example for interviewee EE it would not make a difference to promotion but would have influenced the individual's personality:

"Individuals volunteering would not make a difference in promotion but if would form who they are"

Interviewee EE

For interviewee FF it might if there had been a relevant skills set, although volunteering would not be ranked more highly than other ways of developing skills:

"If volunteering has given someone a skill set that has helped someone this could be part of promotion. It couldn't be the only way, and it wouldn't be ranked more highly"

Interviewee FF

For interviewee BB, there were two sides to the story. On the one hand, volunteering might develop an individual which might make them a good person for promotion:

“I think it might, it would help in terms of the individual who is there, so if you were passionate about a particular thing and could talk about that as a way of gaining a promotion I would view that as being a well-rounded individual, and the type of positive individual that we would be looking to gain”

However, if it were a choice between two equally experienced internal candidates, it would not make a difference, because the interviewee believes that people in work have different motivations to volunteer, and are more likely to volunteer for enjoyment rather than career development:

But probably not actually if I had two internal candidates who each had the same experience in terms of work environment, I’m not sure if their volunteering outwith the business would sway something. And that’s probably because being in work, and then people choosing to volunteer, maybe their motives are a bit different to someone who is out of work, trying to secure employment. I’m not sure if that would be fair or not, but in my experience, people who are in work tend to volunteer for enjoyment, something that they enjoy or something they have a personal commitment to rather than ‘I think this will progress me in my career’. I haven’t found that, that’s not to say it doesn’t exist, but I haven’t experienced that”

Interviewee BB

For interviewee AA, they treat promotion the same way as recruitment in terms of valuing volunteering:

“It’s exactly the same as recruitment for us, it’s about being able to demonstrate the skills that we are looking for, and if that comes from volunteering then so be it”

Interviewee AA

While for interviewee HH, they note that skills and training gained will form part of their development plan which will form part of a process for promotion:

“If part of their other activity gives them a skill or training that is going to benefit them in a more senior role, absolutely it will be part of their development plan, then it will be part of the recruitment process they go through for more senior roles”

Interviewee HH

Similarly, within organisation KK, volunteering is captured in one-to-ones, and therefore would be catalogued and would show development over time:

“In our monthly one-to-ones we are asked ‘What’s new in your life?’. Any volunteering would be picked up here and be taken into account. It would help with year on year scores and show a want to develop”

Interviewee KK

For another employer, they note that from their own experience, getting involved in things shows enthusiasm but whether it would make a difference would depend on who was recruiting:

“It can help an individual with promotion, for example when I first started I got involved in everything to get my name known, it can make you look like a positive person with energy and enthusiasm. In practice it would depend on who was recruiting – they might look at it more favourably”

Interviewee II

6.4 The Applicability of Volunteering Experience to the Labour Market

Survey respondents were asked about the relevance of volunteering when they consider job applications in two circumstances, a) when the experience matches their business, and b) when the experience is unrelated to their business. Figure thirty-one shows that many employers agree that it is relevant in both circumstances but there is a greater level of uncertainty when the experience is unrelated to their business:

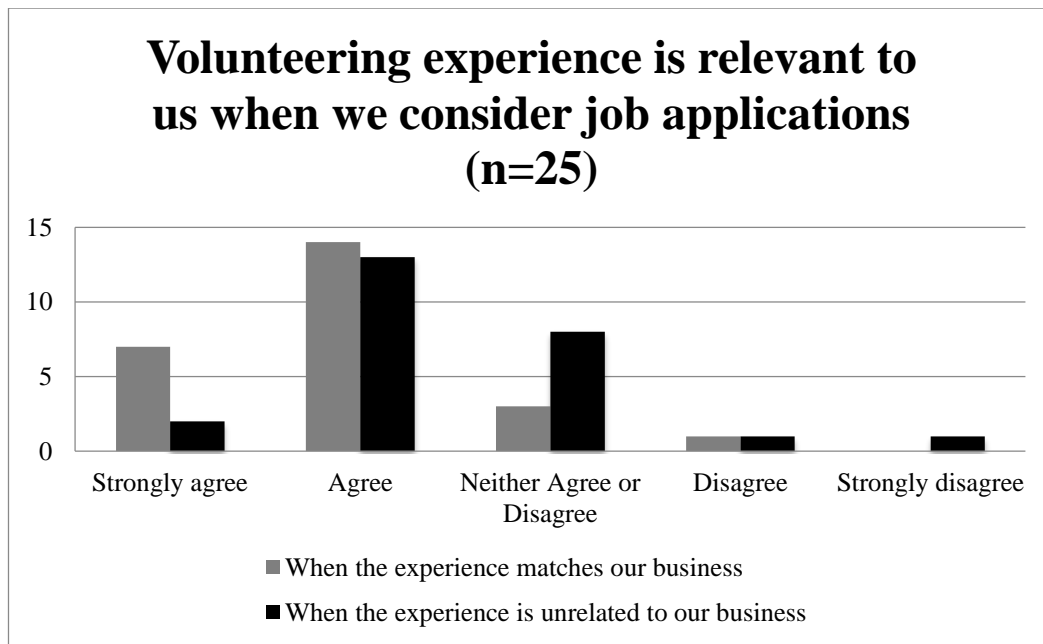


Figure 31: Volunteering experience and job applications

Although the term volunteering is used throughout the research, as discussed earlier in the literature review, the term is used to describe a vast range of activities (Cnaan et al., 1996; Ellis Paine et al., 2010). Some authors have criticised the way volunteering is researched, as the term is used to cover a diverse range of activities without any further categorisation or consideration (Handy et al., 2000), or even a specification of what volunteering is being considered (Ellis Paine et al., 2010), and so, in order to distinguish between activities, interviewees were asked whether there were particular types of volunteering that would be of interest to them in the recruitment process.

This question raised some interesting comments about different types of volunteering, including a preference for self-management and leadership roles, despite some research suggesting that volunteers are often given menial roles and have little opportunity to lead and manage either their own work or the work of others (Lee, 2010a). For other employers, they were interested in volunteering that demonstrated the skills that they were seeking, while others valued any volunteering as long as the candidate could place their experience within the work context, and help them understand the relevance to the job they were applying for.

Interviewee AA expressed a preference for self-managed volunteering over charity shop volunteering:

“I would value volunteering opportunities where the individual has demonstrated that they have self-management skills, so at the risk of caricaturising some volunteering opportunities, someone who had organised an event or organised fundraising would be broadly of more interest to me than someone who works in a charity shop because there is that sense that they have created their own environment and managed it as opposed to being managed by someone else”

Interviewee AA

Similarly, another interviewee expressed a preference for coaching and leadership roles over charity shop volunteering:

“If someone had coaching skills from sport then that would be valuable experience, but charity shop volunteering might not. Running and chairing meetings are transferrable skills. Transferable skills are as important as the role undertaken. Heading up shows leadership. The ability to talk at interview about skills is important”

Interviewee II

It is interesting that employers are hasty to belittle the experiences that a volunteer might gain from charity shop volunteering, particularly considering that charity shops were mentioned by some of the case study organisations in the previous chapter as a common, and helpful, starting place for new volunteers. It is important to note that they do not dismiss charity shop volunteering entirely; they express a preference for other types of volunteering, that they view as more obviously valuable experiences. In this scenario, the individual applicant would have to persuade the organisation that their volunteering experience was relevant, e.g. experience of cash handling, teamwork, or customer services.

For another employer, they required customer service skills and valued volunteering that demonstrated those:

“Given the nature of our industry, customer service related skills gained from volunteering are important. Also skills that involve the ability to deal with potentially confrontational situations, for example, situations that involve someone thinking calmly, quickly and safely”

Interviewee KK

Likewise, another employer noted that it would depend on the type of job being recruited for: strategic experience for strategic roles and communication experience for interaction roles:

“I think it depends on the type of job you are going for. You know, if I was looking for a senior member of staff who was to write policies and define strategies and stuff, and someone was able to say ‘I sit on the board of and I have an interest in and I have a knowledge of’, then I would consider that, but if I am looking for an individual who has to interact with our [customers], I’m looking for someone who is connecting with people in whatever shape or form, and that could be coaching, so then you could say ‘I’m working with young people’”

Related to this, the interviewee notes that there is value in another organisation trusting an individual to deliver:

“There are also trusted positions which makes a difference, so another organisation is trusting them to deliver that so you can say ‘I’m reliable’, so in terms of a business, somebody who is on time and always turns up, is enthusiastic, that’s 90% of the cases, then what they do with that maybe help in terms of the different roles from there, but that is the same as work experience”

Interviewee BB

This viewpoint is in contrast to the experiences of the volunteers in Lee’s (2010a) research, which found that volunteering and work were not equal.

Similarly, another interviewee talked about the relevance of volunteering in the field you wanted to become employed in:

“I think it would show a real sort of keenness in their chosen area of work, if it’s related and they have spent time volunteering in their own time, then it’s absolutely valuable. For me it would prove their commitment to the role if they were doing that”

Interviewee HH

However, volunteering that wasn’t directly related may still be considered relevant:

“I think you would need to look at the skills that they brought to the job you were interviewing for. If they weren’t relevant, it’s not to say that you wouldn’t look at it and say it’s actually quite good that they have done that, ok it’s not relevant to the person specification but I suppose at the back of your mind you would keep it in mind”

Interviewee HH

Finally, this interviewee notes that there is no preference for particular volunteering experience, as long as the applicant can explain the relevance:

“There is no differentiation when it comes to roles: a particular type of volunteering might relate to a particular job. Volunteering in charity collection or amateur dramatics for example, but you would have to understand what it was”

Interviewee EE

Related to this, interviewees were asked whether there were any types of volunteering that they thought were irrelevant. The main theme was that there was no volunteering that was completely irrelevant, but that it was important that the individual saw it as relevant and put it in the context of the job they were applying for. One employer suggested that volunteering where someone is elected into a position may be less relevant to them.

For this interviewee, he stresses the importance of the applicant seeing the relevance of their volunteering to the role and putting it into the employment context:

“Rarely completely irrelevant, the difficulty comes when the individual struggles to place their volunteering in the employment context, so if they don’t regard it as relevant, they don’t talk about it and we don’t know about it. It is difficult to think of an example of volunteering that wouldn’t have value at some stage, even if it is about rounding off an individual’s character and understanding them a little better”

Interviewee AA

For another, the focus is on the behaviour rather than the activity:

“There are no types of volunteering ruled out, it’s about behaviour rather than activity”

Interviewee EE

While for another, the whole person view would see any volunteering as a positive, even if it didn't relate to the job:

"No because everybody does everything for their own reasons, if somebody has volunteered in a tea shop that is for their own reasons, it wouldn't necessarily tie up to a person spec, but if you take the person as a whole you aren't going to see it as a negative"

Interviewee HH

This employer explains that they haven't found any volunteering irrelevant, as, although some volunteering that isn't customer focused may seem irrelevant, it has the potential to demonstrate their commitment to work:

"I don't know, I haven't come across one yet, I do try and find the positive aspects of anything that someone has done, so even if, and I know I keep giving animals as an example, we are not an animal type of organisation, but even if someone has been volunteering in that sense, I would be asking about timekeeping, punctuality and attendance, so there would still be some aspects of that, as a good candidate I would make sure the person potentially employing you knows, so it's not about 'I can take them for walks' or 'I know what feed they use', it's 'I was to turn up five days a week and I was early and I never missed a day'. That's important to an employer as well"

Interviewee BB

For this employer, they differentiate volunteering that relates to social standing in a community:

"Being on, for example committees or church related volunteering as these are typically socially exclusive and I don't believe the skills gained are a true reflection on what they have learned and developed. For example, someone's social standing within a community may keep them in a volunteering role when politically it would not be right to remove them. This isn't a true demonstration of their skills, this could be seen as a popularity contest"

Interviewee KK

The final two comments suggest that there are some attitudes and prejudices towards volunteering held by the interviewees. It is no surprise therefore, that those attitudes shape how they view particular types of volunteering experiences in potential job candidates.

6.4.1 *Accreditation of volunteering*

The survey asked respondents whether they considered volunteering experience to be more valuable if it was related to a qualification or certification. As figure thirty-two shows, the majority of respondents selected 'neither agree or disagree' to this question, although around a third of respondents agreed:

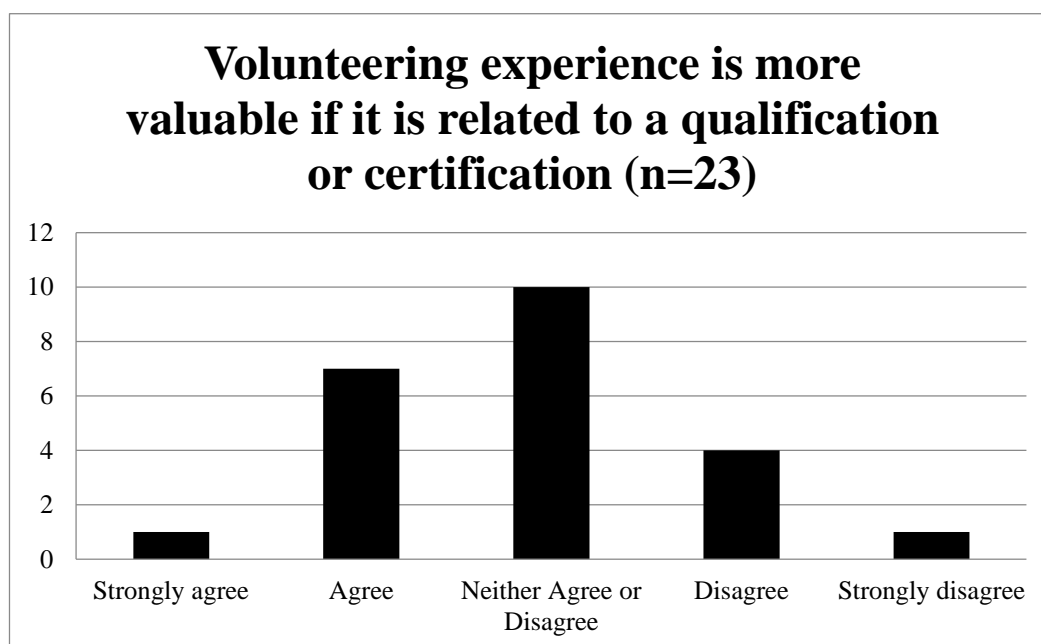


Figure 32: *Volunteering and accreditation*

Interviewees were asked about accreditation in more detail, including whether they felt accredited volunteering was preferable, and if so, whether they felt particular types of accreditation were more valuable. For example, the Millennium Volunteer Awards (Danson and Cullen, 2002) were awarded when volunteers had completed 50, 100 and 200 hours of volunteering, whereas the replacement Saltire Awards (Saltire Awards, 2012), while still taking hours spent into account, also considers the journey and learning from volunteering. The interview set out to find whether employers had any preference for a particular type of accreditation.

Four employers felt that accreditation of volunteering was a positive thing for volunteers to have when applying for employment. The reasons given for this was that an accreditation would demonstrate a particular standard, would bring structure to someone's skills. One employer suggested that accreditation might help employers who were more dubious about the value of volunteering to see that there was a level of work involved, while another suggested that accreditation was more of an area for young people, but that it might help an employer to distinguish between candidates who had volunteered.

In this first example, accreditation is a way to benchmark achievement:

"Accreditation would make a difference because it verifies the achievements and confirms a standard of work"

Interviewee DD

While for this employer, it is a way of helping volunteers to consider their skills:

"Accreditation gives a structure and a formal programme, people don't always think about skills but a programme would do that, bring structure and a recognised skill set"

Interviewee FF

This interviewee values the structure, and feels that accredited volunteering might make employers who are less inclined to value volunteering, see that there is a level of work involved:

"Would it be of more value? Probably actually because it is a bit more structured I would think, because someone has completed a commitment and has something to show for it. Maybe that might help for other employers who don't value volunteering, you know 'yeah, yeah, you can turn up when you like and do what you like and people are no' that hard because you are a volunteer', which is not my experience I have to say, but if that was someone's perception, then by accrediting it really I think that is of value, I would agree with that"

Interviewee BB

Whereas this employer views accreditation as a tool for younger people, they consider it a potential differentiator between candidates:

“Accreditation is more important for younger people, it might help others but older people tend to have their qualifications. If there were two people with the same experience and qualifications and one had additional qualifications from their volunteering, they would be seen more favourably”

For three employers, they feel that accreditation doesn't make a difference, for one, because the skills and experience will be gained anyway, for another because the journey is more important, and for another, unless the qualification is required, it is no more valuable than someone who has the skills without a qualification.

For this employer, the focus is on the skills and experience gained:

“It makes no difference whether it is accredited or not, because they still pick up the skills and experience”

Interviewee KK

While this employer feels that the personal journey is the important part:

“Anything that can enable people to understand the opportunities that they are involved in is more beneficial than a piece of paper, it's more important that they can describe the journey because the journey is more important than the destination”

Interviewee CC

For another employer it is valuable if it is part of the person spec, but a qualification does not make you more skilled than someone else:

“I wouldn't say it was better, if you needed that qualification as part of the person spec , as part of the role that you were recruiting to then fantastic, but I wouldn't have said that's any more valuable. Somebody might have a qualification but the skills might not be as good as Joe Blogs on the other side that has done this other kind of volunteering”

Interviewee HH

This echoes findings from previous research (Newton et al., 2005) that employers rank qualifications below characteristics and soft skills in the recruitment process, and that qualifications are more likely to be used to aid the screening process, rather than the decision to appoint. Newton's (2005) research also suggests that, although qualifications are used as a proxy for skills, the recruitment process is used to evaluate soft skills such as communication. Referring back to figure twenty-three, the majority of employers make use of interviews in recruitment, suggesting that they use the interview process to measure these soft skills. This is supported by the work of Devins and Hogarth (2005) who suggest that the interview method is used specifically to measure personality and soft skills that cannot be easily appraised through an application form or CV. Those employers who make additional use of assessment centres have additional opportunities to measure skills, which Newton (2005) suggests is useful for the measurement of team working ability..

The following two employers talked about accreditation in relation to the existing qualifications that people have, specifically that if someone has a degree, this would succeed other qualifications.

For this employer, an SVQ award or similar would be useful if the candidate had a degree in a different subject, and the SVQ was subject relevant:

"I think there is something about when we ask people for their education history, there is something about different things superseding other things. So in the same way that we don't need to know about their standard grades if they have a degree, I think there is little that an SVQ would bring to a degree in the same kind of field. For example, in one of the jobs that we advertised recently, we asked for a degree in Community Development, but actually what we saw was an awful lot of candidates who had a degree in something – accountancy, business etc., and then a level of experience of the community sector and volunteering. Obviously something like an SVQ would help them demonstrate that a little more in terms that they have been learning from it"

Interviewee AA

Similarly, this employer notes that they are interested in the 'best' qualification someone has, and that there isn't a demand for 'non-standard accreditation':

“We wouldn’t look for non-standard accreditation, there can be overkill and it’s showing what you’ve got best rather than the total. For example, if you have a degree, it isn’t important what you had before”

Although they appreciate that an accreditation can demonstrate personal commitment and a level of work:

“An accreditation like an SQA Award would show that you could work to a certain level and that qualifications had been done with personal sacrifice of time and energy”

Interviewee EE

Regarding different types of accreditation, employers expressed a preference for accreditation that demonstrated skills, as hours do not demonstrate value, and in one case, are seen as akin to community service.

For this employer, the number of hours doesn’t tell him anything about what was done, whereas an SVQ approach might help demonstrate skills:

“I think if you are looking at volunteering in terms of simply an accreditation for the number of hours that they have done, then no, it means very little to me other than they have done the hours. If someone has backed that accreditation, if that accreditation is in terms of someone demonstrating certain skills, so almost like an SVQ type approach then perhaps it would”

Interviewee AA

For this employer, hours of volunteering are valuable; however, the personal gains during that time are important:

“If somebody said ‘I’ve done 100 hours of volunteering’, yes that is of value, but if someone said ‘I did 100 hours of volunteering, but what I’ve gained from it is this, that and the other’, that would be of value”

Interviewee BB

Finally this employer feels that skills based accreditation is more meaningful, and attaches negative connotations to the counting of hours:

“Accreditation is better to be skills based, it means more to us as an employer. Giving a number of hours makes it sound like community service”

Interviewee II

This feedback from employers raises questions over the use of qualifications as a proxy for demonstrating skills. The varying feedback suggests that there is no one commonly held view on the value of qualifications, and that there is some ambiguity over how an individual's skills can be measured during the recruitment process. Where accreditation is viewed as useful is in providing evidence of a level of commitment to learning and/or an ability to work to a specified level. While the voluntary sector employers were aware of branded qualifications such as MV and Saltire, the remainder had less knowledge of what was referred to by one interviewee as “non-standard qualifications”. The idea of an SVQ Award was understood by employers but only viewed as useful where it was either the only qualification held, or a qualification that enhanced previous qualifications. The comments on the value of the number of hours given contradicts earlier comments by employers regarding the value of knowing that an individual had put in the hours in an unpaid role.

6.4.2 ***‘Compulsory’ volunteering***

Employers were asked about so called ‘compulsory volunteering’ such as the volunteering advocated within Government programmes such as the Work Programme. They were asked whether they felt that volunteering undertaken within a programme was more or less valuable than traditional types of volunteering. Employers understand that the current job market is difficult to get into, and that there are some elements of choice within the Work Programme with regard to volunteering, but they feel that it is on the individual to demonstrate their commitment to working, and there was an overall view that personal choice in volunteering was valuable.

This employer suggests that as long as someone has the experience needed, it isn't a negative if they got that experience through a compulsory programme:

“I wouldn't see it as a negative that they have gone into a compulsory programme, because we are all acutely aware that it's difficult for young people and other people to get back into work and if that's a way to get back in, that's how they've done it. Where

it might fall down is if they don't have the experience to do the role, sometimes you can't get around that"

Interviewee HH

For this employer, they are not keen on the 'working for nothing' element of Government programmes, but they see that there are people in society who are otherwise unemployable, and unpaid placements are a way to test out people's ability before committing to employing them:

"Probably, and I think that's around somebody being there because they want to, as opposed to somebody being there because they were told. I'm not a big fan of the Work Programme, you would probably expect that in terms of my link to employability, I'm not a big fan of people working for nothing, however, I understand that it has a place, I do understand it has a place, and if you've got someone particularly who left school and has never worked, has never volunteered, and some of them can be in their twenties, thirties and forties, you aren't talking seventeen, eighteen year olds here, how would you find a way of gaining work experience because they are not employable, how can you persuade employers to take them? And I know that in a lot of organisations, the Work Programme has a value, it's a bit of a try-before-you-buy, take you on for six weeks, you'll get benefits plus expenses, but really what I am doing is assessing you as a potential employee, it's about the longest interview you will ever have I think"

Interviewee BB

For this employer, while they prefer volunteering that an individual has chosen to do as it demonstrates passion, they feel that within the Work Programme there is an element of choice as to whether someone volunteers, and therefore it suggests a level of motivation if they have chosen to do so, but doesn't demonstrate ability in a better or worse way:

“There is something about the passion of doing it off your own back which is important. Equally though, in terms of particularly the education side, when someone backs up their theoretical with practical utilisation of it, that in itself is valuable, so I wouldn’t automatically say it is not as good but there has to be some context. When you look at the Work Programme, when someone chooses to go into volunteering then that would at least suggest that they have some motivation in that direction, so it’s different reasons but it doesn’t necessarily mean they are a better or worse demonstration of ability”

Interviewee AA

For this employer, they feel that they would want candidates to demonstrate commitment if they had come from a compulsory programme:

“So there is a place for it, from there, but as a candidate I would be waiting to be convinced that the individuals wanted to learn and wanted to participate, and they would need to come across, rather than say ‘they were going to cut my benefits so I had to’. But then I think if it was, you would find then their attendance would be poor, sporadic, their timekeeping would be unreliable, your staff would be on the phone ‘where are they’? If they didn’t want to be there, I think that would be a bit of a struggle anyway, to get to the stage where they are turning up every day”

Interviewee BB

For these employers, compulsory types of volunteering are viewed differently in relation to motivation, value and choice.

For this employer, the personal motivation is missing:

“Compulsory types of volunteering are different because the person has had to do it rather than being personally motivated”

Interviewee DD

This employer considers the value of volunteering is different if the individual chose to do it:

“Volunteering that has been done personally off your own back is more valuable”

Interviewee II

This employer questions whether ‘compulsory’ volunteering actually fits the definitions of volunteering such as choice and free will:

“I believe somebody who is volunteering through a government programme is not actually volunteering, they are being made to do something and a volunteer is someone who does something through choice and free will”

Interviewee KK

6.4.3 Volunteer training and its applicability to the workplace

Employers were asked about the training that volunteers receive during the course of their volunteering, and whether they would be valuable in the workplace. There was a sense that any training that someone brings to a job is valuable, and that either generic or specific training can have a value. This comment is illustrative of employer opinion:

“If they’ve been trained in First Aid, financial systems or generic useful things then absolutely. If their training is very specific to the volunteering role they have been doing, they may have picked up bits and pieces that may be regarded as valuable”

Interviewee AA

In the context of annual staff reviews, this employer takes account of activities, such as volunteering, undertaken outwith the workplace that are beneficial to staff within their employment:

“If they had done a leadership course in their own time, or any extra-curricular, if it’s going to be something that can transfer, it’s to our benefit to take it into account. Let’s face it, it’s a piece of training or education that we wouldn’t have to take on if they have already done it. You have an annual review with your manager, and if you’ve done something in a previous employment or previous volunteering setting, it can be taken into account, it’s not as though we would write it off because you haven’t done it here with us”

Interviewee HH

6.5 The Labour Market and Sectors of the Economy

6.5.1 Labour market groups and volunteering

Survey respondents were asked whether or not they agreed that particular groups in the labour market would benefit from volunteering experience. Figure thirty-three shows that the majority of respondents felt that all groups would benefit from volunteering experience, however it is notable that there are greater numbers selected ‘neither agree or disagree’ for people with disabilities, labour market returners, people in insecure employment and the under-employed. This suggests that there is some ambiguity regarding the usefulness of volunteering for those who are either outwith the labour market, or in low-paid, low-security roles. It is of interest that the response aligns to where Government focus their funding and support for employability programmes (UK Commission for Employment and Skills, 2009; Scottish Government, 2012e).

This also suggests that volunteering is viewed as being a more suitable form of labour market preparation for people exiting education (who may have low levels of work experience), people who have been outwith the labour market on a longer term basis (who may have low levels of work experience, or outdated work experience), and those who are outwith the labour market on a short-term basis (and may need to keep skills already gained while searching for new employment).

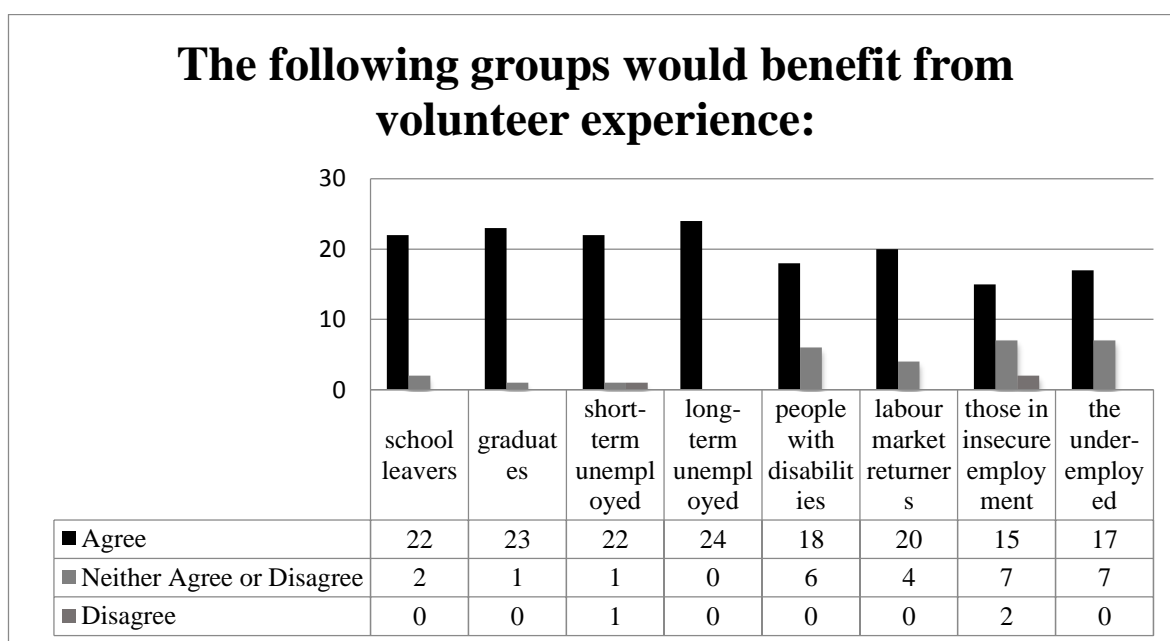


Figure 33: Labour market groups and volunteering

6.5.2 *The current labour market*

In relation to the current labour market, the interviewee from organisation JJ reported that it has been a few years since all graduates in Scotland in their profession found suitable employment. This has led to an increase in internships within the field, which have been promoted by the professional body as a way of gaining experience:

“The [professional body] is encouraging interns and secondments as a way of gaining experience, but not volunteering”

Interviewee JJ

The organisation has directly involved interns as a result of the labour market difficulties, and has also facilitated graduates from their field getting an Internship in a related field in order to gain a start for their career. Their occupation is quite unique as people tend to volunteer in the same field as their work, using their professional qualifications and skills.

Although recruitment strategies were discussed in detail, it is worth noting that in some public sector organisations there has been a recruitment freeze, and this means there are few jobs currently advertised as there is an emphasis on redeployment:

“You will be aware that given the current state of finance in the country, we’ve got a bit of a recruitment freeze, where there are very few posts, unless they are posts that absolutely have to be filled, we are finding ways of moving people around and there are always issues with people who are on the re-deployment register”

Interviewee HH

Employer BB has a physical presence within some of the most deprived areas of the local authority area in which they operate. The areas have high levels of unemployment and youth unemployment. The organisation has several programmes in place to offer paid work placement opportunities to people living within the areas in which they operate, a system that is commonly used to engage the unemployed in activity (Newton et al., 2005; CIPD & Job Centre Plus, 2012). Some of the employer’s programmes have support in the form of funding from the local authority, while others are entirely self-funded, and form part of their commitment to supporting the communities in which they operate. Participants to all programmes must live in the areas in which the organisation operates, and the majority are ‘customers’ of the organisation. All programmes are over-

subscribed. The interviewee describes the importance of participants being treated as full members of the staff team, in order that they and their customers cannot differentiate between trainees and permanent staff, an viewpoint echoed in the writings on aesthetic labour (Warhurst and Nickson, 2007):

“They wear our uniforms, they drive our vans, so a resident wouldn’t really differentiate, they look and feel like permanent members of staff. You can’t tell a trainee from a member of staff which is important to us as we want them to feel valued, it is important to us”

Interviewee BB

In order to support employment, the organisation:

- has a community benefit clause with contractors;
- provides funding for four physically disabled people each year;
- runs a Modern Apprentice scheme which employs up to thirty young school leavers each year in a two-year paid placement; and
- runs a community-based scheme where they recruit over two hundred unemployed people each year in a six month placement with on-the-job training.

The interviewee went into detail about the changing outlook for those participants on the six-month placements:

“We used to sit [sic] about 70% of them going into work, coming from that programme, but work is just drying up out there, so it has reduced, and last year we came in about 58%, but we are still trying really hard to give them employability skills that allow them to be recruited elsewhere. So we pay for all their training, we pay their salaries, that’s not funded elsewhere at all, and I employ assessors that go out and do their formal training and the support mechanism as well, they sit in our team from there”

The interviewee reports that, where they can, they extend the placements if someone is still unemployed, although this is difficult as there is a waiting list of others wanting to start a placement. The interviewee describes the difficulty of turning people away after a successful placement:

“I could fill them ten times over, absolutely, there is a waiting list for people, and also, it’s one of the things we try and manage because people then they complete their time and if they have gained the skills but there are no jobs out there, they might be unemployed

for a period, and they try and come back in, and I've been challenged on that because I've said 'you can't come back in because I need that space for someone else who hasn't had that opportunity', but then they are saying 'but I'm unemployed, and I was really good', which they could have been, 'and I could be a big asset', and I know you would but still, somebody else needs that place"

She goes on to describe how her job in employability means ensuring fellow managers understand the importance of offering the opportunities to new intakes, even though previous placements would be easier to keep on:

"I think our operational managers would prefer to give it to someone who had been on the programme before because there is less training that's needed, they can hit the ground running, but in my role, it's about getting people this opportunity, so I am constantly the conscience I think, of a lot of fellow managers that, 'I know that would be easier, but we have to give someone else a chance'. That is a challenge and I think we all struggle with that"

Interviewee BB

6.5.3 Job creation and support of the third sector

Organisation BB provides financial support to third sector and social enterprise organisations locally by contracting them to provide services. There are three examples of this.

The first is an organisation who supply physical goods to the organisation. The organisation has a small number of paid staff, and charge for the goods but the collation and delivery of goods was done by volunteers. Employer BB had been buying goods from the organisation for a while, and felt the arrangement was value for money, but felt uneasy about benefiting from the organisation's reliance on volunteers. The organisation was happy having a reliable income from employer BB. Interviewee BB describes how she worked with the organisation to fund a paid post:

"They were happy in terms of a secured income, they knew that they were getting this income coming in, but what we did was, we sat down with the project co-ordinator, the organisation's co-ordinator, and we agree that we would fund a post within her

organisation. So somebody that was paid to administer all of our packs that we were getting delivered, and I think she gave it to somebody who was unemployed, so that sat better with our social conscience, but it made me comfortable that I wasn't taking advantage of a small organisation, and their use of volunteers"

Interviewee BB

The second is a social enterprise who supply a service to the customers of employer BB. The service is paid for by employer BB, and is free of charge to customers over sixty years old. The social enterprise employs a small number of paid staff supported by trainees. The interviewee explains that in choosing a social enterprise, they are having a wider impact on employment:

"they are all supported by trainees as well, so that's another example, but that is a service delivery, I want to buy a service, I want free access for our tenants, but the organisation that we've chosen is a social enterprise, with those additional enhancements that I get, benefits of getting people into work, in there as well"

Interviewee BB

The third example is funding fifteen local community organisations who operate within employer BB's operating areas to offer free activities to young people. Organisation BB has a budget to support activities for young people and instead of offering them themselves, or starting up a new organisation to deliver them, decided they would prefer to fund existing community organisations to deliver additional activities on the other nights of the week:

"And the conversation would be around, you are doing two nights a week in that area, I would like that to be five nights, and we will pay you x for your additional coaching hours and the equipment that you may need to allow our kids, and their families don't participate in this so I would be looking for more kids getting access to that, for longer, so that would happen right across"

Interviewee BB

The services are paid for by employer BB, and so are free of charge to young people in the local communities. These organisations have to demonstrate that they involve local people in the design and delivery of services. Funding is provided for two or three years

to offer sustainability, and young people are offered a range of services, including sports, music, drama, and outward bound. Some young people involved in the programmes are working towards Prince's Trust and Saltire Awards.

6.5.4 Army Reservists as employees

Employer HH has around thirty to forty Armed Forces Reservists on their staff. The organisation's national body has a policy that allows the employer to support employees who are also Armed Forces Reservists. The Reservists are in staff roles in the organisation, and are paid a salary, except in times of mobilisation, where the MOD pays their salary and reimburses their employer for the backfilling of their post and associated expenses. Staff who are Reservists are allowed two weeks leave for annual training, and give up their own time at weekends for ongoing training.

The organisation is committed to employing Reservists, and this commitment includes keeping their jobs open while they are mobilised. Mobilised staff keep in touch with the organisation and are able to apply for promotions and other vacancies while they are away. The Armed Forces recruiters are allowed access to the organisation's staff in order to recruit Reservists as they are currently trying to boost numbers.

The interviewee feels that Reservists bring a lot of skills and experience to the organisation, and that their participation in the Armed Forces gives them access to training and experiences that they might not otherwise have had. These experiences are of benefit to their employer and, in the opinion of the interviewee, might give them an advantage over others in the recruitment or promotion process:

"I would have that that having that experience in that environment would be quite valuable and if you were to put them up against somebody without that extra experience, personally I would be inclined to go with the one that has had that wee bit more from the Armed Forces, but that is a personal view"

Interviewee HH

6.6 Summary and Conclusions

Employers have a good definitional understanding of volunteering, they are positive towards the perceived characteristics of volunteers, and many of them have had positive

personal experiences of volunteering. Of those interviewed, several noted that they encourage others to volunteer to share skills, gain skills, or enhance employability. The common viewpoint in terms of the relationship of volunteering to work, is that it is something different, something that an individual is motivated to do. This does not suggest that they see it primarily as work preparation.

Those organisations with staff volunteering policies are focused on the corporate social responsibility outcomes as well as the skills outcomes for staff. The two companies with new policies are at the early stages of introducing these policies, and have plans to gather data to evidence impact. It is notable that the organisations reporting having staff volunteering policies are in the private sector. The public and voluntary sector interviewees did not actively promote volunteering to staff.

In terms of staff recruitment, it is interesting to note that voluntary sector organisations specifically seek volunteering experience when recruiting new staff. Public sector organisations do not actively seek it, but would expect individuals to include it in response to questions on skills and experience, and if so, would discuss it at interview. Private sector organisations would discuss any relevant experience at interview, which depends upon the individual volunteering highlighting it as relevant in order for it to be considered. Employers generally express preference for volunteering that is related to their business area.

In the survey, employers agreed that volunteering could have an impact on careers prospects and careers progression. In interviews, some employers gave examples of volunteers who had gained paid employment as a result of volunteering. However, in relation to career progression, employers were clear that any volunteering undertaken would not influence potential career progression.

Accreditation of volunteering divides opinion. Around half of employers feel accreditation adds to volunteering experience, in indicating ability to learn, record, and work to a particular level. For the other half, they feel the volunteering is enough to demonstrate learning, and accreditation is unnecessary. This ambivalent conclusion requires further research and consideration.

Employers showed an understanding of the labour market conditions. Some noted that in these harsh conditions, they would be aware that some individuals might only have unpaid experience when applying for jobs. Some gave examples of work their own organisations had done to offer paid and unpaid opportunities to those seeking experience. In relation to job seekers, there was a clear trend from the survey and interviews that they felt volunteering was more helpful to those leaving education and those who were unemployed.

The next chapter provides discussion and analysis of the findings of the research fieldwork with both volunteer-involving organisations and employers. The discussion also draws on the relevant literature to highlight contributions to knowledge.

Chapter 7 – Discussion and Analysis

7.1 Introduction

This chapter provides discussion and analysis of the findings of the research fieldwork with both volunteer-involvers and employers. The chapter draws on the literature and the empirical findings and is structured around the research questions and sub-questions identified in the introductory chapter. These questions are as follows:

1. What is the role of volunteer-involving organisations as labour market intermediaries?
 - a. What motivates volunteer-involvers to become involved in employability programmes?
 - b. How do volunteer-involvers see their role in the labour market?
 - c. How do volunteer-involvers relate to the labour market?
2. What are the characteristics of volunteering and employability programmes delivered by volunteer-involving organisations?
 - a. How is employability defined and measured in employability programmes?
 - b. What does the journey to the labour market look like?
 - c. Is all volunteering equal in an employability context?
 - d. Are volunteer-involving organisations recruiting volunteers into jobs?
 - e. What is the impact of this agenda for volunteering?
3. What are employers' views on volunteering in the labour market?
 - a. Do employers value volunteering experience?
 - b. Does volunteering experience convey skills in the labour market?
 - c. Does accreditation enhance volunteering?
 - d. Do volunteer-involving employers behave differently?
 - e. Do employers with personal experience of volunteering behave differently?
 - f. How does Employer Supported Volunteering relate to this?

7.2 Volunteer-involving Organisations as Labour Market Intermediaries

7.2.1 *The motivations of volunteer-involving organisations*

7.2.1.1 *Responding to need*

The case study organisations were selected to cover a range of types of support, geographical location and funding, and so there is no one motivation to be involved that covers all six organisations. That said, a key motivation that comes out of all six cases is that of responding to need. This need has manifested itself in different ways; from individuals approaching organisations for support that went beyond what was already on offer, to Government approaching organisations to provide a service through volunteering, and through organisations seeing a need and offering a service to fill it.

Case studies one, three and five all reported that they were responding to the needs of clients. Clients were approaching the organisations for help in getting into volunteering with a view to moving into employment. This is not a new phenomenon (Gay, 1998; Ockenden and Hill, 2009) but the organisations report that some of the clients approaching have support needs that are more complex than the existing support that they provide. This means that they are not ready to start volunteering without additional support beforehand, an argument that supports the view that the journey to work is more complicated than simply having volunteering experience (Lee, 2010a). There are resource implications of this for the organisations providing support, and it is important that this is taken into account by funders.

For cases two, three and four, there was a motivation of responding to a policy need, and of accessing available funding to do so. Government policy on employability in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2012e) specifically focuses on making funding available to support organisations to respond to need, with a particular focus on the role of the third sector in local partnerships. Case study two, for example, had Scottish Government funding to create the programme, based on reports on skills gaps in Scotland (Futureskills Scotland, 2007; Scottish Government, 2007). Case study three, although also responding to client need, was able to access some local funding from Job Centre Plus to pilot offering a volunteering-for-employability programme. That funding was available to meet the need of those who were unemployed and in receipt of specific benefits. The Scottish Government policy makes particular note that the funding available in Scotland is in addition to that offered by the DWP (Scottish Government, 2012e). Case study four was

also responding to a policy issue of high unemployment, and was given funding to provide a service to a Government programme, adding volunteering to the support provided for jobseekers.

Case study six approached the Department for Work and Pensions with an idea for providing a ten-week programme for enhanced employability, including a volunteering placement. The organisation noticed a gap in provision and offered to fill it, showing an entrepreneurial spirit. Case study five was responding to need, but then was able to access funding for the programme as it became more successful. Similarly, the other cases have had to demonstrate an ability to fill a gap in provision, and to provide a service that is distinct from what is already provided, which is a key prerequisite for accessing funding from both Scottish and UK Government (Department for Work and Pensions, 2009a; Scottish Government, 2012e).

7.2.1.2 Financial sustainability and role creation

It is clear from cases one and six in particular that the funding from being involved in employability work allows the organisations some financial sustainability and also provides the financial security that allows them to meet other organisational aims. Although this was not a reported motivation for involvement, it is a benefit to the organisations, but also to clients as it ensures continuity of provision. In case study one in particular, the organisation offers a wide range of services that volunteers can access in addition to their employability support, made possible by the security of employability funding.

Related to this, there is evidence from cases one and five that volunteering and employability is driving the creation of new volunteer roles to provide mentoring and support to jobseekers. While not explicitly stated at interview, the volunteering and employability programmes are sustaining paid work for interviewees, many of whom have a role dedicated to employability work (cases one, two, four and five). In addition to this, there is evidence that the funding has supported the creation of a small number of paid roles, an issue raised in the literature as an important role for the third sector (Haugh and Kitson, 2007).

7.2.1.3 *Organisational expertise*

Case study one expressed a view that they are the right organisation to provide support for volunteering and employability, as they have years of experience of supporting volunteering. They feel that although the volunteering opportunities they promote are publicly available through their website, they are providing more than just a matching service, and that is important. They are providing additional support to identify skills, planning movement towards the labour market through a series of volunteering opportunities, and helping meet individual needs. This was echoed by case study five, who felt that even when other organisations got a contract to deliver similar work, their expertise was needed in relation to volunteering.

This was also evidenced from the case studies roles in partnership working locally. For example, representatives from cases one and three have a place on local employability partnerships where they are involved strategically in local employability provision. Further to this, there was evidence from all six cases that partnership working was a key element of local provision, and that each of the partners had a specific field of expertise. As such, the case study organisations all form part of a chain or partnership of employability provision, where they can refer onwards, and be referred to, as per Scottish Government policy (Scottish Government, 2012e). Specifically for this thesis, the cases are focused on the volunteering element of employability provision which has formed part of employability pipelines (McGregor et al., 2002; McGregor et al., 2003).

7.2.2 *The role of volunteer-involving organisations*

7.2.2.1 *Supporting volunteers*

It is clear from all of the case studies that they view their role as providing support for volunteering (as opposed to employability). It is notable that all programmes work exclusively with those who are out of work, therefore it could be argued that available funding is driving the focus on the unemployed rather than the underemployed and other labour market groups such as the latent labour market (Scottish Government, 2012e), although there is evidence that some of these groups are coming through the programmes due to benefit changes, for example, mothers returning to work. For those who are in work and seeking to volunteer, they can access signposting assistance into volunteering from volunteer brokerage organisations, but they typically cannot access the employability programmes detailed in the case studies, with the exception of case two,

where the accreditation programme is open to everyone, although the qualification is specifically designed for those looking to enhance employability and move into work.

The support provided through the programmes take different forms. For example, in case study four, the role is to hold a one-off meeting with individual job-seekers to discuss and find a suitable volunteering opportunity. This is part of the contract that the case study organisation has with the Prime Contractor for the Work Programme. Once the person starts volunteering, they then work with their Consultant to discuss how it relates to their job search activity, and the sub-contractor is no longer involved. Effectively, their job is as a subcontractor to the programme, providing a very specific support role for volunteering. Similarly, case two is supporting other organisations to support volunteers through a qualification, therefore not taking a role with the individual volunteer. They are promoting the qualification, and enabling volunteer-involving organisations to deliver it at a local level. They are not prescriptive about how this is done: however, they raise concern about the lack of feedback and their own poor experience of collecting data. Poor quality data collection, and specifically poor data quality when multiple organisations are reporting on working with individuals has been raised as an issue previously (McGregor et al., 2002) and is echoed by the case studies here.

Case studies one, three, five and six are supporting volunteers through a hands-on basis. The depth and scale of this support is dictated by the circumstances of individual volunteers, an approach raised previously by Gay (1998) who distinguished between those who had specific labour market aims to meet through volunteering and those who were trying out volunteering in the hope it might move them closer to employment. Case study one has four programmes available, and demographics and circumstances dictate which of these programmes an individual will access. The programmes all involve the individual having a point of contact within the case study organisation, and receiving mentoring and support as required. There is also a degree of planning involved, where a member of staff will help an individual to consider their goals and how they can achieve them. Further, peer support is built in, where job-seeking volunteers can support each other in their job search. Their involvement in the employability partnership means that they can refer on to partner organisations for any specialist support, a practice encouraged by Scottish Government (2012e). In addition, they can refer internally to their specialist health team or other teams as the personal circumstances of volunteers dictate.

Case study one specifically raised the issue of supporting individuals to do something different. Referring to volunteering being viewed as a “middle-class activity” (Sheard, 1995; Harris and Rochester, 2001; Rochester et al., 2010), they feel that volunteering can give people aspiration as they get a chance to do something different, meet new people, get outside their own areas, and learn from working with others. They have had feedback from volunteers that this is important, and therefore offering these opportunities is an important element of service provision.

7.2.2.2 *Duration of support*

Cases three, and six have one programme (or pathway), and individuals work through within a specific timescale (twelve and ten weeks respectively). These timescales are short, particularly in the light of Hirst’s (2000, p.48) findings regarding the time taken for individuals to have “positive labour market outcomes”. There is the opportunity in both cases for individuals to access pre-volunteering support and assistance in deciding what type of volunteering they are interested in (a need identified by Lee (2010a)). In each, additional support is provided while an individual is volunteering, and there is an open door approach allowing clients to request support as needed. There is some divergence between the two cases in relation to career planning. Case study three draws the line at only providing support for volunteering, feeling that that is their specialism and that there are other organisations locally who are better placed to offer career support. Case study six, however, does offer this support alongside volunteering, and offers this on both an individual and group basis. It is notable, however, that case study three is an organisation focused solely on volunteering, while case study six has a wider remit of social capital which includes, but is not exclusive to, volunteering.

Case study five is quite unique amongst the cases for the laissez-faire approach to support. They do not have defined timelines, and while they do offer training, everything is done at the pace of the individuals involved rather than to a presented timetable. Although a lot of the work they do is related to employability, it is not their sole focus, and it is up to the individual whether they are supported to find work. Some individuals join the centre for other reasons, but move onto seeking employability related experiences once they have tackled other personal issues. This links to the findings from Lee’s (2010a) research that individuals on incapacity benefits needed support beyond volunteering. The opportunities available within the centre are hands-on, and the set-up encourages individuals to learn a selection of skills, from picture framing through to cooking. Their

approach to referral is that they ask the organisation they are referring to to come along to their organisation to see the client, rather than sending the client on. This again is unique amongst the cases as the approaches taken to partnership mean that clients are often referred on either internally or externally.

In the example of case study three, they are strict about the timescale of support made available to clients, while conversely, case study five takes the view that everyone will take a different amount of time to move towards work, and so they are more flexible regarding how long someone can be involved. The funding available has an impact on this. Case study three's funding is based upon twelve weeks of working with a client, and demonstrating development during that period. Although the hands-on support then stops, the client can still continue volunteering, and can still access statutory support from the other partners of the employability partnership. For case study five, as they use funding from a range of sources to support their work, they are able to be more open-ended in their approach. Case study one, for example, works with individuals for a longer period, but notes that, if they are unemployed, they will be moved onto the Work Programme, and although they can continue with their volunteering, the organisation can no longer support them due to funding conditions.

7.2.2.3 *Supporting into volunteering, not supporting into work*

It is interesting to note that, with the exception of case study six, none of the case study organisations has aims or targets for moving people into work. The cases all have a role in supporting people into volunteering, but with a demonstration that some progress has been made towards the labour market to meet the terms of funding. In case study three specifically, their funding means that they have to be able to account for each individual who has come onto their programme, and demonstrate some movement towards employment. For cases two and four, due to the nature of the case studies' roles, they are not responsible for demonstrating impact as they are effectively supporting others to deliver, and providing a specific service within another programme, respectively.

Case one reported that expected outcomes had changed recently from being funded to support people into work, to being funded to support people into volunteering. They viewed this as a positive step which recognised the complexity of moving into the labour market, and suggested a shift in thinking by policy makers.

7.2.3 *Volunteer-involving organisations and the labour market*

7.2.3.1 *Labour market conditions*

The case studies operate within local labour markets, as detailed in the methodology chapter, with the exception of cases two and four, which operate at a Scotland-wide level, although support is delivered at the local level. The other cases demonstrate that they are aware of the local labour market conditions, and work to assist clients to prosper within those conditions. They form part of local partnerships, either formally (cases one and three) or informally (cases five and six). These partnerships allow the organisation to access labour market support, e.g. be informed in advance of upcoming recruitment opportunities, or to access training and support from other organisations.

Case study three, for example, reports that the majority of jobs arising in their local area are low-skill, part-time, retail or hospitality related posts. Although their link to the employability network affords them access to advanced recruitment information, the local area also has a high number of students (Barr, 2011a) who are competing for the same jobs, and may be more attractive to employers than the long-term unemployed, or single mothers returning to work as a result of benefit changes (White and Gallie, 1994; Canny, 2004; Newton et al., 2005; Lippmann, 2008). Related to this, is the issue of underemployment, which has recently been investigated by the Scottish Parliament as an area of concern (Scottish Parliament, 2012). This means that people are working fewer hours than they might wish, or are working on jobs that they are overqualified for, both of which could apply to much of the employment available within case study area three. As mentioned previously, volunteering and employability programmes target the unemployed rather than the underemployed.

7.2.3.2 *Mapping volunteering to the paid labour market*

While there is an argument that, for each job in the labour market, there is a volunteering equivalent (Speakman et al., 2001), this has not been the experience of the case study organisations. Take for example, case study one, who have had occasions of there not being appropriate volunteering opportunities for individuals with IT experience. In one scenario, they had to work with partners to find an opportunity for an experienced individual who was seeking volunteering experience, while in another, they had to supplement volunteering experience with additional training, to ensure an individual had the skills and qualifications needed for the job they wanted. This suggests that there is a mismatch between the roles available in volunteering, and the paid labour market.

Similarly, case study four had experience of having to work hard to get individuals experience in training, for example an individual who wanted to work as a trainer ended up teaching young boys to fish as a volunteering opportunity, as there were no training or tutoring roles available.

This suggests that, although there may be labour market mismatches, there are opportunities to fit existing or sought skills to the volunteering experience, but this is reliant on the individual doing the matching having the ability to think of alternative options, and/or having the contacts to create those opportunities. Case study four had another example where an individual with IT experience had difficulty in finding a suitable volunteering opportunity, and had to look harder to find something suitable. This suggests that IT experience in particular may be an issue in relation to volunteering as perhaps it is viewed as something that would be done by paid staff in organisations, or perhaps volunteer-involving organisations are not thinking widely enough about what volunteers can offer. This relates to the Hillage and Pollard (1998) framework which highlights the importance of the individual being able to identify and apply skills in the context of the labour market.

Nevertheless, the case study organisations demonstrate, through these examples, that they have the necessary contacts and ideas to allow them to find opportunities for individuals in these circumstances. This raises an issue, however, for individuals seeking volunteering who are not accessing support to find a position. They may simply search online through Volunteer Scotland (Volunteer Development Scotland, 2010c), and upon not finding what they are looking for, may decide not to volunteer. This is a missed opportunity, and suggests that it is not enough for volunteer-involvers to create bespoke opportunities for individuals who they are working with; instead there is potential for volunteer-involvers to be more aware of the labour market conditions of supply and demand, and offer volunteering experiences that are more consistent with the skills needs of the local market.

Gay (1998) argues that volunteer-involving organisations are so desperate for help that they will take on anyone except the “patently unsuitable”. There have been issues arising from the case studies, regarding criminal records and volunteering, which suggest that there is still work to be done regarding access to volunteering for all (Institute for Volunteering Research, 2004). Part of this issue is the promotion of volunteering through

Job Centre Plus, who are sending individuals to case study organisations who are unsuitable for volunteering. Although the organisations try to work with Job Centre Plus to ensure this doesn't happen, there is some work to be done in this area. Previous pilot work (Baird, 2003a) demonstrated that a Volunteer Centre/Job Centre Plus partnership approach was successful in resolving some of these issues.

7.3 The Characteristics of 'Volunteering and Employability' Programmes

7.3.1 *Defining and measuring employability*

As detailed earlier in the thesis, only one of the case studies has targets of moving people into work. For the remainder, they are working on moving people into volunteering, either as part of a wider pathway to work (cases one, three, four, five and six), or they are offering qualification support in order to provide volunteers with a qualification that may help them get work (case two). As such, the measurement of whether a person has neared or achieved employability is not easy to calculate as there are no measures in place. However, based on the Hillage and Pollard (1998) approach, there is potential to identify gains in employability at the individual level. Across all the cases there was a sense that data collection was difficult. The difficulty relates to isolating the impact of volunteering (Hirst, 2000), being able to follow up with clients (McGregor et al., 2002), feeding in to single databases at local authority level (McGregor et al., 2002), and the timescales over which impacts are measured (Hirst, 2000).

Hirst (2000) found that there was difficulty in isolating the effects of volunteering from other activities when considering whether it had an impact on the employability of unemployed people. This view was echoed by case study one who felt that it was difficult to track the volunteering impact, particularly when individuals were moving through a number of interventions, including work placements and training as well as volunteering. Case study four also found that, while they could account for those who they referred onto volunteering, they had no means of collecting data on what happened next, even as to whether the individual started volunteering. Other case study organisations also reported the issue of keeping in touch with people once they had commenced volunteering, and while some were successful in such tracking, for others it was less easy. Case study three, for example, noted that they could follow up with the organisation that the individual was referred to, but that this was time consuming for both parties.

Case studies one and five both reported that they fed into a local government database which tracked the movement of the unemployed through various interventions and through to employment. Case study five was particularly negative about this means of data collection as it allowed multiple organisations to claim success from an individual, although the reality was that individuals had support from a number of organisations, with no one of them being solely responsible for their positive development. They described anecdotal experiences of organisations claiming to be responsible for success where they had actually referred individuals on, which may be the result of a tough financial climate. Nevertheless, referral is a key theme across the case studies, as organisations make use of specialist support for clients that they themselves cannot offer. Issues relating to referral are not new, particularly the difficulty of mapping impact and tracking developments across multiple agencies (McGregor et al., 2002).

Although the database means that at least some data is being captured, the responsibility put on individual organisations to input in an honest and timely manner, might impact the quality of the data that comes out. McGregor (2002) raised this issue over ten years ago when he stressed the importance of a system that was able to capture multiple agency inputs. Particularly where funding is tied to demonstrating positive impact, organisations may feel the need to overplay their role in order to maintain funding. Alternatively they may view their role as being more impactful than it was. This issue needs to be resolved in order to improve data quality.

All cases reported a level of drop out from their programmes. This was viewed as being related to the personal circumstances of individuals, and the reasons given for this, including health, housing, and finance, all relate to the “personal circumstances” element of the McQuaid and Lindsay (2005) framework detailed in the conceptual chapter. This gives weight to the view that employability is not a stand-alone issue relating to labour market preparation, as personal circumstances also impact on the ability to work or volunteer. The case study organisations all accepted this flux as part of working with individuals who were outwith the labour market, and would welcome individuals back into their programmes when they were able to join in. This adds weight to the idea that it is not simple to track impact, and see movement over time in a linear fashion, as individuals can have setbacks outwith the programmes that can hinder their ability to move forward.

Hirst (2000) also suggested that timing was an issue with regard to measuring the efficacy of interventions, e.g. after six months might not be long enough to see an effect of taking part in a volunteering programme. Interestingly he found that those who volunteered took longer to (re)enter the labour market than those who did not, and suggested that this might be down to the individual becoming more aware of what work interested and suited them, and therefore being more selective about job applications. Further to this, those candidates who were successful in finding employment generally benefited with higher salaries and longer tenure. This issue of timing of impact relates to the timescales of the employability programmes. For example, case study three's twelve week approach means that individuals do not have a long time period over which to see the impact of their volunteering. Although the programme is not expected to move people into work over that short a period, the measurement of impact is over a short timeframe, and any developments after the twelve weeks will be missed as the individual is no longer in touch with the case study organisation (unless informally).

7.3.2 *The journey to work*

Several authors argue that volunteering is part of the journey towards employment rather than the only element in the journey (Hillage and Pollard, 1998; Cordon and Sainsbury, 2005; Ockenden and Hill, 2009; Lee, 2010a). For example, on an evaluation of an employability intervention, participants reported that they had more confidence as a result, but did not feel ready yet to apply for work (Cordon and Sainsbury, 2005). CEV (2007) suggest that volunteering might provide such a good experience for individuals that they may be reticent to move on to paid work. Similarly, Lee (2010a) found that the experience of subsequent employment was not always positive, and for one of his research participants, they had gone back to volunteering having found that paid work was too stressful. This suggests that the journey isn't necessarily linear and unidirectional.

Nevertheless, in order to give some structure to the journey to the labour market, it is often depicted as a linear journey, with clear steps between unemployment and employment. The Scottish Government Strategic Skills Pipeline (2012e) is shown below, and it shows progression across five stages, from referral through to in-work:

Pipeline	<u>Stage 1</u>	<u>Stage 2</u>	<u>Stage 3</u>	<u>Stage 4</u>	<u>Stage 5</u>
	Referral/Engagement activity	Barrier removal	Vocational activity	Employer Engagement & Job Matching	In-Work/Aftercare
Client Status	Not Job Ready	Not Job Ready	Job Ready	Job Ready	In Work
Examples of Eligible Activities	<p>Early Engagement Activity</p> <p>Identification of needs</p> <p>Development of Action Plans</p>	<p>Barrier Removal and Confidence Building Activities</p> <p>ESOL</p> <p>Literades</p> <p>Specialist and non-traditional employability provision (e.g. pre-debt/financial, homelessness)</p> <p>Vocational rehabilitation</p>	<p>Vocational activity</p> <p>Job search advice</p> <p>Work Experience Placement</p> <p>Activities to raise awareness of enterprise and entrepreneurship</p> <p>Accredited pre-employment training for core skills (e.g. ICT)</p>	<p>Employer engagement and job matching activities</p> <p>Training, mentoring and supporting men and women into occupations or sectors where their gender is under-represented</p>	<p>Support to help employee retention, including upskilling/workforce development</p> <p>Initiatives to encourage development of vocational skills among low-skilled and low-waged individuals</p> <p>Apprenticeships</p> <p>High level business and management skills</p> <p>Training to support business start-up (particularly for groups under-represented at managerial levels)</p>

Figure 34: The Scottish Government Strategic Skills Pipeline

Of the case study programmes, the one which most closely maps onto this framework is that of case study three. This diagram is shown below and follows the same number of stages, with almost the same pathway as the Scottish Government pipeline:

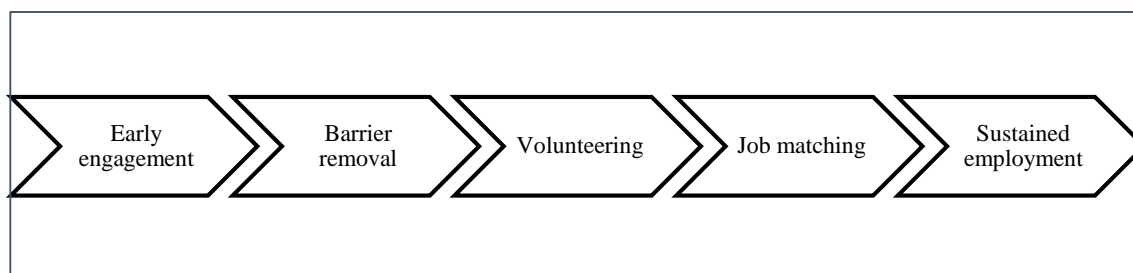


Figure 35: Case three – The five-stage employability pathway

This particular example doesn't allude to different support for different groups. The pathway exists for all clients, although it is understood that the pathway won't be a linear progression; some clients may skip stages, or may have to spend longer working on one particular element. The pathway from case six is also similar to the Scottish Government pathway, as shown below:

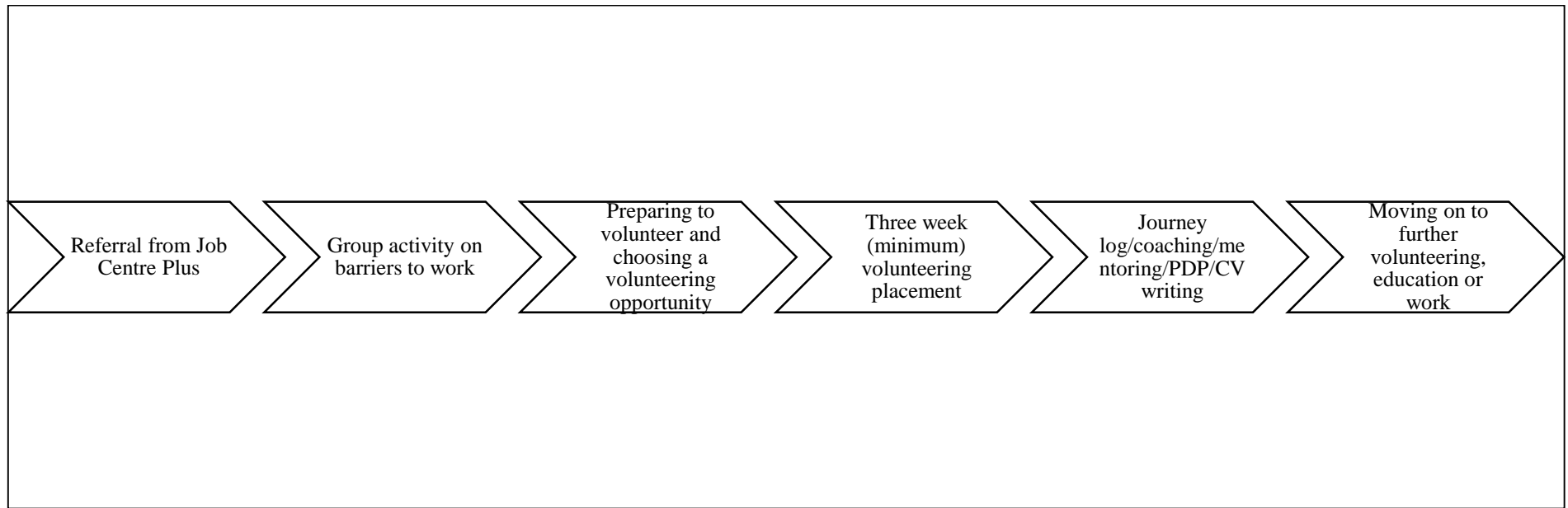


Figure 36: Case six – The ten-week programme pathway

As explained in the case example, not all clients stay in the programme for all the stages, and some clients make progress to the end but do not attain a positive destination in terms of a job or further training immediately.

In the interviews, case five noted the informality of their programme, and therefore there is no diagram to explain the progression that clients make. However, within the interview, they talked about the stages to work, and those stages mentioned align with the Scottish Government diagram above.

Cases one and four allocate individuals informally and formally, respectively, into client categories, and those categories dictate the level and depth of support that is needed. For example, in the diagram from case one, below, there is a pathway delineated by age, and one for health conditions, and then a pathway for all. All clients can access the support for all, but the other categories of support are applied to those who fit into one (or more) of the other categories:

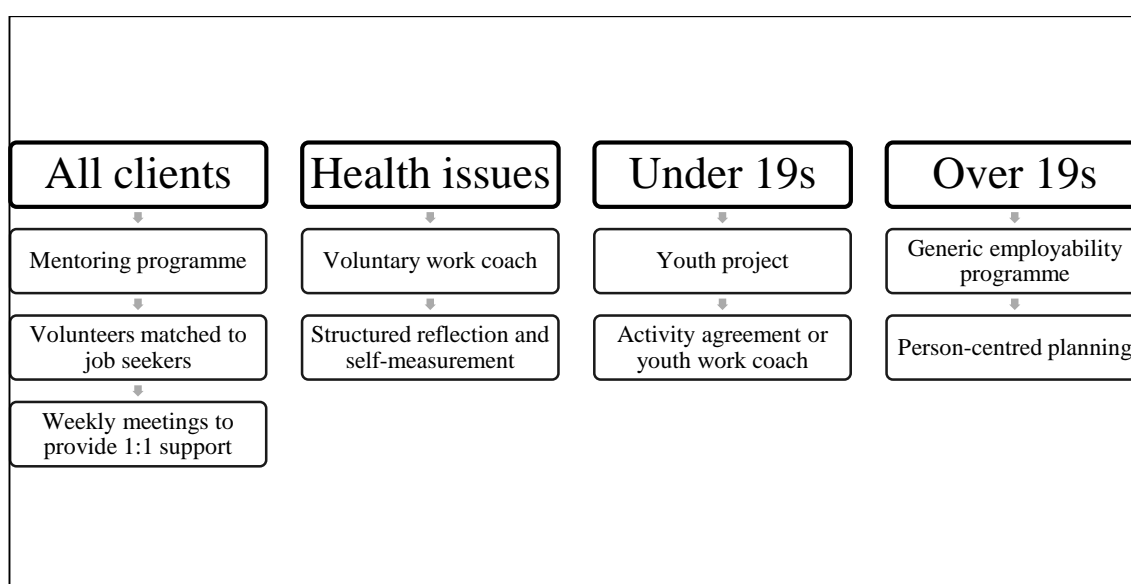


Figure 37: Case one – The employability programmes and clients

This means that those in the categories of health issues and under 19s get additional support from a member of staff who specialises in their demographic. As the diagram shows, this involves coaching, reflection and self-measurement. The generic employability programme is based around person-centred planning, but also involves the mentoring support detailed in the first part of the diagram.

Similarly, in case four, clients are divided into groups after referral. The groups are divided by distance from the labour market, and will dictate the work of the consultant with the individuals. The volunteering element is available to those in each of the three groups but depends upon either the consultant suggesting it, or the individual being keen to participate:

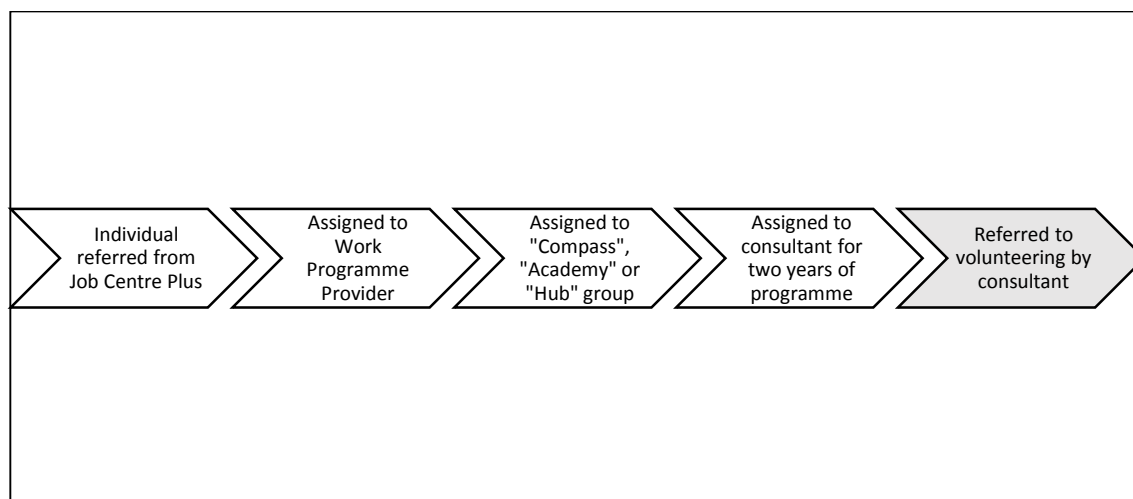


Figure 38: Case four – The Work Programme pathway

As noted in the detail from case four, previous negative perceptions of volunteering were found to be putting some people off volunteering. In addition, this model relies upon consultants taking initiative to promote volunteering to clients. Although the member of staff holds briefings with consultants the staff turnover rate hampers the effects of this and therefore awareness of the programme amongst clients.

As case two is an accreditation programme, it has a linear approach to moving people towards the qualification, as seen in diagram:

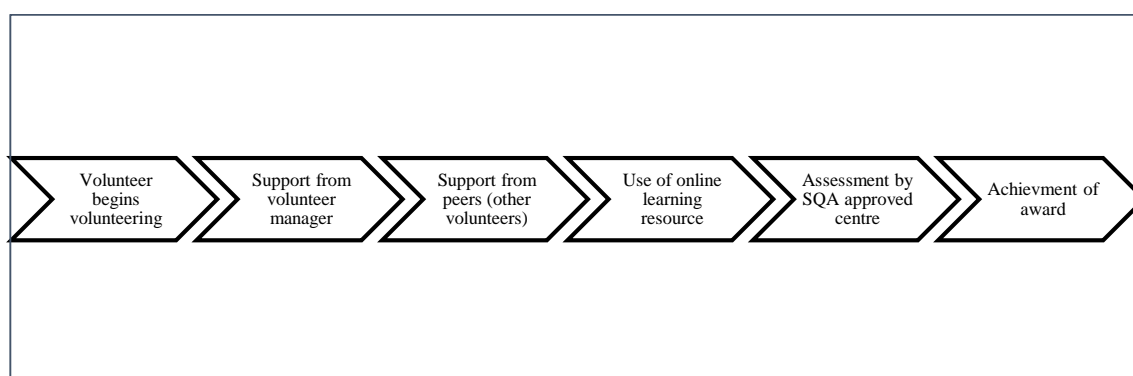


Figure 39: Case two – The VSkills pathway

The difference between this case and the others is that the volunteering comes first, and then the individual accesses support in order to undertake the qualification. As such, the qualification is most suitable for those already settled in volunteering.

The linear approaches from each of the cases provide a clear delineation of what each programme offers in terms of opportunities for clients. The detail from the interviews, however, demonstrates that the reality of the delivery of the programmes is much more messy and non-linear. Many of the clients referred on to volunteering are ones who are far from the labour market and have had little success with other interventions. As such, an approach that gives people hard targets is not suitable, and therefore the organisations are realistic that while they are working to an overall programme, not everyone will demonstrate a clear journey from unemployment to volunteering, or even onto employment. For individuals, this may be a different experience from their experience of statutory unemployment provision, and may provide a less stressful, more supportive experience. However, as Lee (2010a) found in his research, the easy going situation within volunteering may make the eventual transition to work more painful as it is more of an adjustment to make. However, also as pointed out within the literature (Lee, 2010a; Ellis, 2013), volunteer-involvers, while potentially happy to support volunteers into work, may not be happy to create conditions that are work-like, if they did not already exist.

7.3.3 *Volunteering in an employability context*

Apart from case study two, all the organisations are placing individuals into volunteering opportunities (either in-house or with other organisations). An overarching finding is that the clients of employability programmes have access to any volunteering opportunity that they can find, although the suitability of individuals to positions will be negotiated. For those organisations which have their own databases of opportunities (cases one, three and five), they have an on-tap catalogue of opportunities on offer to potential volunteers. For those organisations who do not (cases four and six), they both make use of the Volunteer Scotland website (Volunteer Development Scotland, 2010c) and other volunteering websites such as Do-It (Youth Net, n.d.).

There are specific differences in the provision of support across the organisations for clients accessing volunteering through an employability programme. Each of the cases who place volunteers provide some support to the individual in choosing an appropriate opportunity (or more than one), and also in preparing for that opportunity. These same

organisations also all have networks of contacts locally that they are able to source opportunities from, or negotiate the creation of new opportunities for volunteering. As such, it is a bespoke service. Related to this, organisations one and three are linked in to local employability networks, and are therefore well informed about future recruitment opportunities for staff, and are able to prepare volunteers for vacancies with appropriate experience.

Case organisations one, three and five all offer new volunteers the opportunity to be eased in to volunteering, offering roles such as gardening, cooking, and charity shop volunteering. These are viewed by the case study organisations as easy introductions as the roles can be taught on-the-job, involve working as part of a team, and allow for confidence building as skills progress. The same organisations also note that as individuals become more confident, they have the opportunity to move onto other opportunities that are more linked to the paid labour market. So for example, if they want to work in care, then they might begin volunteering in a charity shop environment, build their confidence and team-working ability, and then use the reference from that volunteering to move into a care volunteering position. Care was noted by several of the case studies as a key area of recruitment, although it is not an area with a large number of volunteering opportunities, again raising an issue about labour market mismatch. It is worth noting that the most popular volunteering opportunities involve working with young people and animals (Scottish Government, 2013c), and caring is perceived to use general soft skills and so presents less of a barrier to entry than other careers with specific skills requirements.

Case organisation one talked specifically about someone having to undertake two volunteering opportunities before applying for work, to allow them two references on their CV. As such, the two opportunities could give a wider range of skills and experiences, providing better labour market preparation. The provision of mentoring within this example provides support for this two-step approach, which is also supported by the literature on employability being a journey (Hillage and Pollard, 1998).

In relation to the timescale of volunteering, case study one talked about asking people to volunteer for around six months before asking for a reference. Otherwise, there was little sense from the case study organisations that there was a timescale over which development towards work could be expected. The programmes that had particular

timeframes (cases three and six) provided support for a period of time, but encouraged individuals to carry on volunteering beyond that time. There was no sense of a particular frequency of volunteering being more beneficial.

7.3.4 *Volunteers moving into jobs*

Cases one, three, five and six all mentioned that they had recruited unemployed volunteers into posts within their own organisation. In addition, they had all recruited volunteers into volunteering roles within their organisation, including mentoring roles supporting job-seeking volunteers. As such, there is an internal labour market in evidence in each of these settings. In addition, there was anecdotal evidence from these cases that organisations that they had referred volunteers on to had recruited them into paid positions.

This suggests that volunteering is improving the employability of some of those who volunteer. However, this is distinct from volunteering improving the employability of an individual who has to compete in the traditional labour market. Using the Hillage and Pollard (1998) framework, employability would have increased in both contexts, although there are other barriers in the labour market, meaning that a supply-side approach alone cannot be successful (Peck and Theodore, 2000; McQuaid and Lindsay, 2005). It also suggests that some volunteer-involvers are using informal recruitment measures. One issue related to this was discussed by case study one, who raised concerns about the level of expectation that volunteers had, that they would get a job at the organisation they volunteered with. Given the economic circumstances of third sector organisations in Scotland and across the UK (Skills -Third Sector, 2011; Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations, 2012), this may be a false expectation given their financial constraints and so limited job openings. Additionally, according to a survey of Scottish charities, over half (55%) were run by volunteers and had no paid staff (Doyle, 2013). This suggests that the pool of jobs within the sector is low, and that getting a job directly from volunteering may be the exception rather than the rule. This means that volunteer-involvers have a role in managing the expectation of volunteers that they might move directly into work from volunteering.

7.3.5 *The impacts on volunteering*

In a survey of volunteer-involving organisations in Edinburgh (Celini, unpublished-a) showed that 80% of organisations reported increased volunteer numbers in 2010. This

was supported by the experience of the case study organisations. It was suggested by respondents that this was due to the increase in people available to volunteer, and the wider range of volunteers available to select. This had the impact that some organisations had to set up waiting lists to deal with the level of demand. A potential surge in volunteer numbers was predicted as a potential issue due to the changing labour market (National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement, 2009; Wiggins, 2009).

Similarly to the case study experiences, survey respondents reported increased demand for volunteering opportunities, as well as increased demand specifically for opportunities that offered employability skills and relevant experiences. While some organisations were able and happy to offer this, for others it was less appropriate as they simply wanted a workforce to commit to their cause, an issue raised by Ellis (2013) in her commentary on volunteering and employability. As many organisations rely on volunteers to provide core services, and therefore need committed volunteers, there was reported difficulty for volunteers' managers in aligning this with an employability agenda as they found that individuals were seeking volunteering that was short-term, primarily based on self-interest, and likely to stop in the event of paid work being found. Nevertheless, research suggests that volunteer-involving organisations prefer volunteers with work experience and greater skills than those disadvantaged in the labour market (Danson, 2003; 2009). This idea of clashing agendas echoes research that has suggested that volunteer-involving organisations do not exist to provide job preparation (Danson, 2003; Lee, 2010a). For volunteering more generally, employability is increasing the influx of potential participants, but the long-term, altruistic and philanthropically motivated volunteers are still needed within organisations for sustainability. That said, research which considered the different roles and motives of volunteers in a community found that altruism and self-interest are not mutually exclusive (Hardill et al., 2007).

In response to the same survey, some organisations complained about the impact of short-term volunteering and increased turnover as the majority of volunteers who had become involved for employability reasons did not stay involved once they found paid employment (Celini, unpublished-a). All of the case study organisations reported that they encouraged people to continue volunteering after any formal programme, and once they had found paid work, but found that not everyone was in a position to do so.

The issue of job seeking volunteers stopping volunteering once they find work has arisen in previous research (Lee, 2010a) where it was revealed that individuals prefer to focus on job search activity once they have acquired the experience needed. This rate of withdrawal is similar to the findings of Hirst (2000) who reported that, amongst job seekers who had undertaken volunteering to enhance their employability, around a third had continued to volunteer in the same way once employed (the other two thirds had either given up completely, or reduced the number of hours).

Some survey respondents (Celini, unpublished-a) reported that this was impacting project planning and increasing the need for investment in training for new volunteers due to high turnover. Some individuals were keen to continue volunteering once they were employed, but required a degree of flexibility from the volunteer-involver in order to manage this, again impacting on planning and workload for other volunteers and staff. Hirst (2000), Lee (2010a) and Ellis (2013) all raised the issue about the dual agendas of volunteer-involving organisations: on the one hand, they are happy to promote the potential employability gains of volunteering in order to recruit volunteers, while on the other, they can find themselves either unable or unwilling to meet the needs of volunteers who become involved for employability reasons.

Case study one raised some issues relating to highly skilled volunteers and the challenges for practice. They gave the example of Citizens Advice as an organisation which attracted highly skilled volunteers, but noted that some organisations who were not used to highly skilled volunteers struggled to work with them.

The increase in highly skilled volunteers reported by the case study organisation is echoed by research carried out in Northern Ireland (Volunteer Now, 2010) and England (Curtis, 2013). This was also raised by survey respondents who reported that the recession had led to “more highly skilled people entering the volunteering market, creating more competition for volunteers with additional support needs” (Celini, unpublished-a, p.5). In support of this view of competition within volunteering, Danson (2009: 19) argues that the ‘volunteering labour market’ mirrors the paid labour market in that “the same groups face problems of entry, selection and recruitment, redundancy and retention”, therefore it is not unexpected that an increase in the supply of skilled volunteers would make access difficult for volunteers with additional support needs.

From a volunteer survey that was carried out alongside the organisational survey (Celini, unpublished-b), volunteer feedback has suggested that 76% of volunteers feel they now have something to put on their CV, and 69% feel they have had useful work experience. The reported benefits of volunteering include increased confidence, wellbeing, friendships, a sense of purpose, the chance to try something new and employability. These reported findings related to what the case study organisations report that they aim to provide through their employability programmes. Within employability, specific gains reported include: networking, skills development, confidence, and experience, discovering the Third Sector as an employer, and having something to say at job interviews and on CVs. This reflects the skills needs identified in the Scottish Governments “Skills for Scotland” strategy (Scottish Government, 2007). These reported finding are echoed in research on volunteering in disadvantaged communities (Baines and Hardill, 2008), unemployed people on a Council for Voluntary Service employability programme (Cordon and Sainsbury, 2005), those who had volunteered while out of work (Gay, 1998) and refugee groups (Stopforth, 2001).

In a survey of volunteers, some reported an interest in more training and the chance to complete accredited courses related to their volunteering (Celini, unpublished-b). This issue of some volunteers being more interested in others in accreditation and award is echoed in research on participants in Millennium Volunteers (Danson and Cullen, 2002) and research on the provision of training to volunteers in York (Kenwright, 2000). With the exception of case two, which provides support for the accreditation of volunteering for employability, the remaining cases offer opportunities for accreditation but let individuals decide whether to pursue them. VSkills (Volunteer Development Scotland, 2010d), for example, was mentioned in several case studies as a potential option, although there were concerns about the licensing costs. Both Saltire (Saltire Awards, 2012) and Discovery Awards (The Discovery Award Association, n.d.) were noted as potential options for the younger, and older, respectively.

In the same survey (Celini, unpublished-b) there was some negative feedback in the survey from volunteers about the process of getting into volunteering, which included mention of the issues of bureaucracy and Disclosure which can take time and put people off . This echoes findings of research undertaken in the UK in 2004 which focused on volunteering and social exclusion, and found that ‘over-formal recruitment procedures’ such as lengthy application forms, intimidating interviews and lengthy police checks were

off putting to potential volunteers, particularly those who were unemployed, were disabled, or from black and minority ethnic communities (Institute for Volunteering Research, 2004). The issue of bureaucracy has been given a high profile in England, with Volunteering England running a campaign to 'free volunteering from red tape' which calls on the UK Government to make volunteering easier to access (Volunteering England, 2010).

The case study organisations reported awareness of these issues, and noted that they were taking action to support individuals from the programmes into volunteering by improving practise both internally and externally. Where an individual was unsuitable for volunteering, for example in case study one, the organisations reported a policy of being honest and upfront with individuals in order to manage expectations.

Case study four reported that some clients had applied to volunteering and never had a response which was difficult for them to follow up due to the structure of their programme. Related to this, a survey of volunteer applicants found that when some individuals have approached organisations, they have taken ages to come back (and some never have) which has dented their confidence (Celini, unpublished-b). Again, this finding is echoed in the research on volunteering and social exclusion which found that delays in responding to an initial enquiry, delays in processing applications, and delays in placing volunteers in a role had discouraged individuals from volunteering, and in some cases, led them to believe they weren't wanted, therefore reducing the likelihood that they would apply again elsewhere (Institute for Volunteering Research, 2004). The case organisations who referred individuals onto opportunities had processes in place to minimise this issue, although they did not have the power to tackle it outright as they rely on organisations to follow up with potential volunteers.

According to some volunteers it was a barrier that some organisations seek references before they can begin volunteering, as they are volunteering explicitly to give them a reference for paid work (Celini, unpublished-b). This was another issue raised by the 2004 research, which found that individuals were put off by roles advertised that requested a reference as they assumed they wouldn't be able to apply, particularly if they were ex-offenders (Institute for Volunteering Research, 2004). Good practice guidance encourages volunteer-involvers to consider being flexible in accepting references, e.g. not insisting on previous employers as the only source of a reference, or on referees having

known the individual for two years, and accepting email or telephone references (Volunteer Centre Edinburgh, 2010). Again, the case organisations demonstrated negotiation with organisations for volunteering and employability clients, which suggests that programme clients may have a better chance of accessing volunteering than someone who applies 'cold'.

7.4 Employers' Views on Volunteering in the Labour Market

7.4.1 *The value of volunteering experience*

The recruitment policies of the employers interviewed demonstrate that, with the exception of the third sector employers, who actively seek volunteering experience, and explicitly ask applicants to include it on application forms and at interviews, there was an ambivalent attitude towards volunteering. For public and private sector employers, they expected that any relevant volunteering experience would be included on an application form so that it could be discussed at interview, they noted that the individual would have to consider it relevant in order to include it. This was also raised in previous research which found that third sector organisations were much more likely to appreciate the skills and experience gained through volunteering (Cook and Jackson, 2006).

The recruitment practices of the employers interviewed showed that where volunteering was included on application forms, or discussed at interview, it would be taken into account. This ambivalent view puts the onus on the individual to promote their volunteering in the recruitment process. As mentioned earlier in the research, individuals do not always find it easy to recognise or articulate their skills. Research by both Lee (2010a) and Cook (2006) suggests that employers do not always appreciate the skills and experiences that volunteering experience can offer. Related to this, the same research (Cook and Jackson, 2006) found that employers want applicants to clearly lay out the skills they have during the recruitment process. This argument is supported by the policy work of Hillage and Pollard (1998) who suggest that the presentation of skills in the recruitment process is important. However, the case studies report that while they specialise in volunteering, they often refer clients on to careers organisations to help with job applications and CVs. This may have an impact on individuals in that they don't get advice on capturing and promoting the skills from volunteering. However, those who had a PDP, learning log, or other process in place during volunteering should be better equipped to describe their learning and skills from volunteering.

In terms of how volunteering experience is taken into account in the recruitment process, there was feedback from employers that it was taken into account, but that volunteering would play more of a role for applicants who lacked paid experience (for example, students and graduates), or the unemployed. This view was supported in the online survey of employers which found that employers felt volunteering would be beneficial for those labour market groups, more so than the other labour market groups, e.g. labour market returners, the disabled, those in insecure employment and the underemployed. In her commentary on volunteering and employability, Ellis (2013) suggested that volunteering for enhanced employability is more straightforward for young people and recent graduates, but for other labour market groups it depends on what jobs they have had previously and what they want to do. This might help explain the employers' views in terms of volunteering as a straightforward replacement activity for paid experience on the CV of those joining or re-joining the labour market either from education or from unemployment.

In their research into the employment behaviours of employers when dealing with the unemployed, Newton and colleagues (2005) found that employers typically prefer work experience but they will view volunteering as an acceptable substitute where an individual has limited paid experience. This rhymes with the feedback from employer EE who suggested that if someone who was unemployed had been volunteering, it showed a desire and ability to work, and would be viewed positively. Conversely, research by v and YouGov (2009) found that the majority of employers feel there is no difference between job candidates who have volunteering experience and those who do not. The majority of respondents in the online survey disagreed that this was the case, suggesting that although volunteering may not play a part in selection, employers view those who have volunteered differently to those who have not.

McQuaid and Lindsay (2005) found that although an individual might be suitably qualified for the work, the employer's attitudes towards their qualifications and experience, as well as the circumstances of the other applicants will have an impact on their ability to gain work. This was played out in the employer data which suggested that volunteering would only be used to distinguish between otherwise similar candidates. Related to this, Stopforth (2001) found that for refugees, having volunteering experience was a positive addition to a CV, but that where the individual had British qualifications, this was ranked more highly. This suggests that it isn't a straightforward case of

volunteering being relevant or irrelevant, and that it will depend upon the employers' attitudes as well as the other candidates who may have paid experience relevant to the role.

7.4.2 *Volunteering experience and skills*

Research suggests that whether or not volunteering enhances employability depends upon the kind of job being sought (Cook and Jackson, 2006). Whether or not the job requires the kind of skills that comes from volunteering is open to interpretation by the employer. For example, some employers were negative about the experience that a volunteer might gain in a charity shop; it was disparaged as not demonstrating leadership, not being fast-paced, and not being self-managed. In addition, one employer was negative about church based and committee volunteering, suggesting that the politics of being involved in such things were that of popularity rather than suitability for the role. It is not the position of this research to criticise the opinions of interviewees, except to comment that these views may be based on negative personal experience or anecdote. Although these opinions could be written off as uninformed, they are important, as the individuals who hold these opinions are in positions of power in relation to recruiting staff, and if someone applies to them for work, with those types of experience on their CV, they may find themselves not considered for the role. This is particularly important in the light that case study organisations report that charity shops are a good first step for unemployed volunteers. This suggests a mismatch between supply and demand.

Danson (2003) suggests that the skills mismatches in the paid labour market are replicated in the volunteering labour market. There was a sense from employers that volunteering suggested a particular personality or level of ability or interest, but that it may not fully demonstrate ability to work. This depends upon the individual applicant and their ability to convince employers that their skills are relevant to the job they are applying for.

Employers mentioned volunteering in relation to education during the interviews. As this was unprompted, this was particularly interesting. They noted that although volunteering is secondary to educational attainment during the sifting of applications, it provides a source of practical experience which can enhance educational qualifications. This was thought to be particularly the case for school-leavers and graduates. Related to this, there is evidence that some Higher and Further Education institutions in Scotland are starting to include volunteering within the curriculum as a route to providing students with

experience to enhance their qualifications (McClure, n.d.). In addition, some Higher and Further Education courses expect that candidates will have volunteering or similar experience before commencing study (AGCAS, 2012). Although this is not within the scope of this research, it is an important consideration that requires further consideration.

7.4.3 *The accreditation of volunteering*

Ockenden and Hill (2009) suggest that there is little known about the impact of accreditation on labour market success. In the online survey of employers, the majority selected 'neither agree or disagree' to the proposition that accreditation made volunteering experience more valuable. The interviews cast more light on employer views, although there was no settled will on its applicability to labour market success.

Around half of the interviewees suggested that accreditation was positive, it showed an ability to learn, an ability to work to a particular level, and a way for employers to distinguish between candidates. The other half of the interviewees felt that accreditation didn't add anything, because the individual had still had the experience, the journey was viewed as more important and because unless the qualification is relevant to the post, it isn't really important to have. This split of opinion echoes the findings of Cook (2006) who found that almost half of employers in the international volunteering sector felt that accreditation of volunteering was positive. This leaves volunteers with a confusing message, and suggests that the decision to gain accreditation shouldn't be made solely with employability in mind. However, it supports the role of the case study organisations in allowing individuals to decide whether they want to be accredited.

This issue relates to research by Newton (2005) which suggests that where individuals have qualifications, it suggests an ability to learn, but qualifications are typically ranked lower than skills and attributes during the recruitment process. Nevertheless, Cordon and Sainsbury (2005) found when evaluating an employability intervention, that although individuals felt they had gained from their volunteering, they felt they had nothing to show from it, and therefore would have preferred some form of certification. The request for something to show relates back to the issue of volunteers being unable to articulate what they gained from volunteering (Hillage and Pollard, 1998; Lee, 2010a).

Regarding specific types of accreditation, there was a sense from employers that standardised accreditation was positive as it was easily benchmarked to other qualifications. Some employers expressed a view that they were interested in the highest qualification that someone had, so for example if they had a degree, they wouldn't take an SVQ into account (unless it was subject relevant and the degree wasn't). Regarding non-standard qualifications relating to volunteering, there was a preference overall for qualifications related to the volunteering journey (e.g. skills gained, personal reflection) rather than numbers of hours. This supports the view that employers are interested in the skills gained from volunteering. This is similar to the work on Further Education qualifications for adults, where the returns are often negative (Gasteen and Houston, 2005).

Widening the consideration out to training, in research undertaken on employers' processes when recruiting the unemployed, Newton (2005) found that employers specifically seek core skills and characteristics and expect to provide specific training for the job. This argument was echoed by interviewees. Two specifically noted that the training that volunteers receive in their volunteering role may be applicable to the labour market and will be useful to them in employment. This is interesting in the context of Hirst's (2000) finding that those unemployed people who had had training during their volunteering had more positive labour market outcomes.

Kenwright (2000) argued that when it comes to providing training to volunteers and their clients, that volunteer-involving organisations were ideally situated for training as they are not part of the rigid frameworks of education. However, if increasing numbers of volunteer-involving organisations are offering training, particularly where it is accredited, this might have negative impacts for those who are uninterested in formal education. It seems to be important from both the case studies and employer data that accreditation is offered as an option, and support provided to those who wish to undertake it.

7.4.4 *Volunteer-involving employers*

It is clear from the interview findings on recruitment processes and practices that third sector employers do behave differently in the recruitment process. They specifically seek volunteering experiences in potential recruits, whereas employers in the public and private sectors are more ambivalent towards volunteering. As volunteer-involvers they also work with volunteers regularly and may be more likely to understand different

volunteering roles, and see the applicability of volunteering experience for the jobs they advertise.

Volunteer-involvers were also asked whether they were likely to recruit staff who were volunteers with partner organisations, or organisations they were in professional contact with. The answer from all of them was 'yes'. In one example, due to the geographical location and the role of the organisation, it was highly likely that any member of staff recruited would have worked with a partner organisation, which adds weight to the suggestions relating to the third sector being an appropriate employer for job seeking volunteers.

Related to the issue of volunteer-involvers employing volunteers, are the findings of Devins and Hogarth (2005) that word of mouth and internal recruitment are prominent within the labour market. If an individual is volunteering for an organisation, or for a sister organisation, then they may be given the opportunity to apply for a role internally, or they may be in a position to find out about upcoming vacancies. This view is supported by a recent report by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills which found that word-of-mouth was the prominent recruitment method for UK employers (UK Commission for Employment and Skills, 2013)

Supporting these findings, Lee (2010a) suggests that a relationship between volunteering and employability might be more realistic in the third sector. This argument adds to the view held by Haugh and Kitson (2007) that some third sector staff are disengaged from the 'orthodox labour market'. Without disparaging the third sector, it does appear keener and better placed to recruit those coming through volunteering programmes, albeit the financial circumstances of the sector, and their impact on available jobs (Skills -Third Sector, 2011; Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations, 2012).

There is a potential argument that organisations who involve volunteers and promote volunteering are more positive about volunteering when recruiting paid staff. A parallel argument that supports this comes from the work of McGuire and colleagues (2008) on training and development, who argue that managers' personal values guide the importance given to the topic within the organisation. It could be argued that managers who place a high value on volunteering give it more prominence when recruiting paid staff.

There are also arguments that the third sector has a role to play in increasing employment (McQuaid and Lindsay, 2005; Haugh and Kitson, 2007) and so the creation of paid roles forms part of this. Employers in the third sector had a small number of paid roles but this fluctuated with available funding. There was evidence of the creation of volunteering roles within the third sector employers echoing that reported by the case study organisations.

7.4.5 *Employers with personal volunteering experience*

Both Cook (2006) and Gammon (2010) found that managers with volunteering experience were more positive about volunteering in potential recruits. Eight of the ten interviewees had personal experience of volunteering, two of whom are volunteering currently (both are private sector employers). There was no sense from the data that volunteering was treated differently by employers with volunteering experience. That said, those with experience of it were also those who were disparaging about particular types of volunteering, suggesting that they might have had first-hand experience informing their opinions.

White and Gallie (1994) also found that there was differentiation in how employers treat qualifications, which may also hold true for how they treat volunteering.

7.4.6 *The role of Employer Supported Volunteering*

Research suggests that Employer Supported Volunteering challenges traditional definitions of volunteering because it is not always freely chosen or done in one's own free time (Brewis, 2004; Rochester, 2006). In addition, Brewis (2004) and Ellis Paine (2010) argue that volunteering is a private endeavour, and therefore it is a 'grey area' when thoughts turn to considering it as part of career prospects. Employers in this research also took the view that staff volunteering in their own time was not something that they would concern themselves with and consider as part of career progression. That said, two private sector organisations offered financial support to staff who were involved in volunteering for charities in their own time, although they found some staff unwilling to share this information.

Employers with volunteering policies focused on allowing staff time off work to volunteer. For the employers this played a dual role of helping staff to gain skills, while helping them to meet their corporate social responsibility targets. This is supported by

previous research by Brewis (2004) and McBain (2007) which suggests that Employer Supported Volunteering takes a skills focus from the view of the employer: they see it as a method of up-skilling staff and meeting company public relations objectives. The text of the volunteering policies provided supports this view.

However, the same research suggests that employees themselves view Employer Supported Volunteering as a means of personal satisfaction rather than career gain. This may relate to the research by Gammon and Ellison (2010) where employers reported that Employer Supported Volunteering did not have an impact on staff retention. Employers BB and EE, who supplied their staff volunteering policies, were in the early stages of implementing them and collecting data and therefore were unable to provide much insight.

An interesting and important issue was raised by employer CC, a third sector employer. They reported that their paid staff volunteered for the organisation over and above their contracted hours. This is not a typical form of ESV and raises a number of issues relating to the choice to volunteer and pressure on staff. The interviewee was clear that this was a choice, but there are implications for the relationships within the organisation as well as for the creation of paid roles. This creates a moral dilemma as the organisation is unable to meet its obligations within the hours allocated to paid staff. This suggests that there is a need for additional funding, or the creation of volunteer roles distinct from the work of paid staff.

Nevertheless, it is unlikely that this practice is a one-off, particularly considering that data on the third sector shows that while the number of staff employed is not changing, the hours worked are dropping due to funding (Skills -Third Sector, 2011; Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations, 2012). As such, this issue is worthy of further research and consideration due to its implications for the third sector workforce, e.g. increased pressure on staff, reduced likelihood of new posts if the work is being covered, and impacts on relationships between volunteers and staff, and between staff who volunteer and those who do not within organisations.

7.5 Summary and Conclusions

Volunteer-involving organisations are playing a role of labour market intermediaries as partners within local employability networks. This role is a practical one, and involves offering specialist support for volunteering, as part of a network of provision. Where an individual requires additional support, the volunteer-involvers can draw on their networks for referral.

Volunteer-involving organisations are typically motivated to become involved in employability programmes through responding to need; either a need that has arisen through clients of their organisation, or a need that has been identified at a local or national level. In terms of volunteering, they hold the view that if it is part of the employability offering, they are best placed to provide support for it as they are specialists in volunteering. Being part of programmes of employability has helped organisations achieve financial sustainability.

Volunteer-involvers see their role in the labour market as supporting people into volunteering with a view to them moving into the labour market at a later date. They are quite clear that they provide support for volunteering not work (with the exception of case six) although they have anecdotal evidence of individuals moving into work as a result of volunteering.

Volunteer-involvers relate to the labour market through the employability partnerships. These partnerships make available information on future developments that will bring jobs to the area, and they can therefore help volunteers to work towards gaining the skills that will be required to be successful in the labour market. They also work in partnership with local colleges, local authorities, Skills Development Scotland, and other agencies who keep them up to date on labour market requirements.

The volunteering and employability programmes delivered by volunteer-involving organisations are characterised by the provision of additional support. Many of these organisations also provide support for volunteering for the general public. What makes volunteering for employability different, is the additional provision of one-to-one support and mentoring, support to log learning, and support to map skills and plan volunteering activity to gain skills for future employment.

Within volunteering and employability programmes, employability is defined as moving people towards work, rather than moving them into work. The organisations had difficulty calculating employability, particularly relating to the impact of volunteering as clients were typically receiving more than one type of support. Where they were asked by funders to feed into databases locally, there was difficulty in identifying impact, as well as evidence of double counting. As such, measurement was difficult, and organisations are working to tackle this.

The journey to the labour market is different for each programme. Each programme has a process which outlines the interventions and different steps in the journey towards employability. The reality is that individuals work in different ways towards employability. Some do not need support in all areas, others need to take breaks between stages. There is no one journey to the labour market, but there are structures that help guide interventions.

All volunteering can contribute to employability. Clients can undertake any volunteering opportunity available, but they will be advised regarding suitability to their current circumstances, and future plans. For those who have been out of work, they are typically started on an easy, team-based activity to build their confidence before moving on to something specifically related to their chosen career. Most employability clients undertake more than one opportunity to improve their breadth of skills and experience. There is a sense from volunteer-involvers that moving from volunteering into employment is a longer-term journey and therefore undertaking different roles provides opportunities for different skills while an individual adjusts to activity.

Some volunteer-involving organisations are recruiting volunteers into paid roles within their organisations. Some are recruiting employability volunteers to volunteer within their organisations, and that has led to paid employment. There is anecdotal evidence that this is a common practice, but organisations are keen to manage expectations regarding the opportunities available. This suggests that some organisations are using volunteering as a test-bed for new recruits.

The employability agenda impacts on volunteering. It is increasing the number of potential volunteers available for organisations. However, it is also increasing the number of volunteers who need support, which has an impact on organisations capacity. Some

volunteer-involvers have experienced issues with volunteers stopping volunteering once they have commenced work. This has been tackled in one of two ways: for some, creating a minimum commitment to ensure the organisation gets a return on their investment in the volunteer, and for others, creating short-term, skills focused volunteering opportunities for those seeking work.

Employers view volunteering as a positive activity, and view volunteers as having good characteristics. Many employers have volunteering experience, and encourage others to volunteer. However, this reflects their individual experience, and while this might impact their behaviour in recruitment, they are guided by organisational policies and practices.

Employer's value volunteering as being a signifier of positive characteristics. Third sector employers are most likely to seek volunteering experience in the recruitment process, although all employers will take it into consideration if it is mentioned on a CV or application form. This puts the onus on the individual to be able to identify and articulate their skills and experience in the context of the job they are applying for. Volunteering is viewed to be more important for those lacking recent paid experience, for example, the unemployed, graduates, and school leavers.

Volunteering experience conveys skills and suggests to employers that individuals have positive characteristics. However, employers question the value of particular volunteering experiences such as charity shops and committee volunteering. This is interesting in the context of the case studies, where charity shop volunteering was viewed as a good start for new volunteers. Again, the need to articulate relevance places the onus upon the individual applicant to make their skills clear.

Views on accreditation were mixed, with around half agreeing that it enhanced the volunteering experience and half disagreeing. Accreditation is viewed as a way to demonstrate that an individual has catalogued their development, has identified their skills, and that work has been carried out to a particular level, however for others, the volunteering is enough of a demonstration of these things. As a result, the individual volunteer should decide whether volunteering would benefit them, taking into account any qualifications they already have.

Employers who involve volunteers behave differently. Employers in the public and voluntary sectors within the research involved volunteers. Voluntary sector employers were more likely to actively seek information about applicants volunteering experience, however, any employer would take into account all information provided, and would discuss it with applicants. Voluntary sector employers were also more likely to recruit from partner organisations locally.

Employers with personal volunteering experience don't behave differently. Many of the employers interviewed had volunteering experience, but there was no sense that this lead them to treat volunteering differently when recruiting. Those with volunteering experience were more vociferous about the advantages and disadvantages of particular volunteering activities.

Employer Supported Volunteering provides an important context. Three employers of the ten had staff volunteering policies, of which two were provided in the interview process. The two were new policies, and although organisations had set up data collection mechanisms, there had not been enough time to see the effects of the policies. There was no sense that these employers had particularly different attitudes towards volunteering, and they all agreed that staff volunteering (either work based or private) would not make a difference to career progression.

The following chapter draws conclusions from the research, identifies limitations, and suggests potential areas of interest for future research that would add to the findings of this research.

Chapter 8 – Conclusions

8.1 Introduction

This chapter draws conclusions from the research, structured around the three main research questions. There follows a section reflecting on the theoretical contribution, the research process, and a final section which identifies areas for future research that arise from this thesis.

8.2 Volunteer-involving Organisations as Labour Market Intermediaries

Although formal volunteering is viewed by both Scottish and UK Governments as having a role to play in meeting policy objectives (Scottish Government, 2008b; Cabinet Office, 2011), and this drives support for volunteering, and organisations involving volunteers, the main motivation for volunteer-involving organisations in becoming involved in employability work is to meet local need. This need has arisen at the local level with clients approaching the organisations requesting support into paid employment, with the exceptions of cases two and four which arose through negotiation with Government but still arose from an identified policy need. As a result, volunteer-involving organisations have taken on labour market intermediary roles as part of partnership approaches to employability provision, providing specialist support for volunteering.

The programmes described in the case study chapter demonstrate that many clients are those furthest from the labour market. They are also clearly delivering on policy objectives, relating to working with the unemployed, as this is the focus of Government funding. However, drawing on Hillage and Pollard's (1998) list of labour market groups, it appears that support is not solely focused on the unemployed, and that other labour market groups are approaching volunteer-involving organisations for support. Several cases noted an influx of mothers returning to work, primarily as a result of changing benefits legislation. Hillage and Pollard (1998) define such labour market returners as the latent labour market, distinct from the unemployed, and suggest that they have different support needs. Volunteer-involving organisations involvement in volunteering and employability, therefore, goes beyond supporting the traditional unemployed, an important finding for this research.

The employability agenda provides volunteer-involvers with financial security, allowing them to meet other aims, and to maintain, and even create jobs. New volunteering

opportunities are also arising through this agenda, particularly in relation to mentoring jobseekers. In some cases, employability clients have moved into these volunteering roles and new jobs, suggesting the existence of internal labour markets. As such, on a small scale, employability programmes are supporting the sustainability of volunteer-involving organisations and creating new opportunities in local labour markets.

Volunteer-involving organisations are working successfully in partnerships locally with local authorities and other partners to provide a pathway for the unemployed through volunteering and other employability interventions. Referral is a key element of this. Attitudes to referral across those partnerships varied amongst the cases, with one case in particular preferring not to refer clients on, instead inviting other organisations to visit them to support clients directly, as they were concerned that individuals may feel passed around. Support provided is driven by the client needs and organisations provide different options for different needs. Although each programme has a structure and/or timescale, these are necessarily flexible. As a result, volunteer-involving organisations are providing flexible support to jobseekers by offering support into, and through volunteering, as well as providing support for personal circumstances through referral.

8.3 The Characteristics of Volunteering and Employability Programmes

Access to volunteering in Scotland has been a policy priority for the Scottish Government from the Volunteering Strategy (Scottish Executive, 2004) to the present date where support is made available for volunteering at the local level (Pearson, 2010). Data on volunteering in Scotland suggests that those who are unemployed, sick or disabled, or living in the 15% most deprived areas are least likely to volunteer (Scottish Government, 2013c). Support for volunteering is viewed as a way of attracting people to volunteering, for example, making volunteering easy to access, offering training and mentoring. The employability programmes described in the case studies are acting to make volunteering accessible, and are therefore attracting people to volunteering who have not volunteered before, and are statistically less likely to volunteer.

Danson (2003) argues that the barriers to volunteering echo those to the paid labour market, with those groups marginalised as they are not seen either by themselves, or by others to have something to contribute. The volunteering and employability programmes are tackling this through working with clients one-to-one to establish skills and interests,

and to find volunteering opportunities that will help individuals to have the experiences they need to develop skills for the labour market.

During the period of recession in the United Kingdom, there were reports of increased interest in volunteering as those effected by job losses, pay freezes, or reduced hours sought a route either back into employment, or into more secure or suitable employment (Danson, 2009; Volunteer Now, 2010; Bacon, 2012). This context has influenced volunteering and employability programmes, however it also limits the opportunities for individuals to move into work. As such, the cases report the need to be realistic with clients about their opportunities to move into work as a result of volunteering. The programmes therefore are clear that their focus is helping people to volunteer, not to find work, although it may lead to work.

The case study organisations on the front line of volunteer involvement report increased enquiries, particularly from those outwith the labour market, either through self-referral or referral from statutory agencies. This suggests that regardless of support from Government, demand for volunteering is high. This impacts on volunteer-involving organisations, some of whom have had to change their ways of working to offer suitable placements for those seeking employment. This is a shift from the findings of Lee (2010a), who suggested that the roles that exist are driven by organisational operational needs rather than the needs of the volunteers. One way in which this has been handled is implementing waiting lists to manage demand (Celini, unpublished-a), although evidence from the cases suggests that non-response, or slow response to requests to volunteer is off-putting to applicants. There are reported frustrations about volunteers leaving at short notice when they find work (Celini, unpublished-a), an issue also raised by the case studies. Organisations involved in volunteering and employability therefore, are involved in a delicate balancing act, managing the needs of job seeking volunteers and the needs of the organisation to deliver its core services.

Related to this, the case study programmes offer individuals a supported journey into volunteering with a view to moving onwards to employment. On paper, the programmes are structured and linear, but in reality, as far as possible, they are flexible to the needs of clients. The programmes offer support into volunteering, assistance with preparing for volunteering, support during volunteering, and access to training, accreditation and mentoring. Some programmes have quite clear timescales and refer clients back to

statutory support once these timescales are complete, while others take a more laid back approach, allowing clients to work at their own pace. The source and type of funding shapes what types of support are available and who it is available for, for example, those cases with funding from the DWP and Job Centre Plus have short timescales with attached targets. It is notable that these targets are associated with moving people into volunteering, first and foremost. A key finding is that although the cases offer programmes over a specific structure and timeline, each individual is different, and tackling different issues, and therefore there is no standard timescale within which someone can expect to move into employment. As such, if Government aims to support volunteering as a route into work, it will have to consider the timescales under which progression is likely, bearing in mind the multiple issues that job seekers face.

Related to this, is the issue of outcomes and measurement. It was clear from the cases, that data collection has not been an easy element of the programmes. The ability to track the impact of volunteering has been hampered by dropout, timescales, referral and the partnership approach. These issues have made it difficult to track individuals progress (as they have finished volunteering or the programme by the time they are job seeking), or to track the impact of volunteering (as many participants are undertaking multiple employability interventions). There is evidence of measures of skills being used at the individual level, but this is more to assist the individual with tracking their learning, rather than feeding in to data collection. As such, there is little hard evidence of the impact of volunteering being collected, which has implications for the future of such programmes.

In terms of the volunteering that is made available for employability clients, they have free choice over what they do, but are advised as to what meets their existing needs, and future employment aspirations. As a result volunteering of every type is available, but there are easy opportunities available for those who are concerned about starting, for example charity shop volunteering where individuals can learn on-the-job. The volunteering undertaken sits within the non-profit paradigm (Lyons et al., 1998) from the literature, echoing the findings of Lee (2010a). There is evidence from across the cases, however, that there are labour market mismatches, and that there aren't always volunteering opportunities to suit everyone's needs, for example, IT experience is difficult to find. Therefore, a key strength of the volunteer-involvers is in using existing knowledge and networks to find, or create opportunities to suit individual needs.

8.4 Employers' Views on Volunteering in the Labour Market

Employers view volunteering as a worthwhile activity which demonstrates positive attributes about individuals. Those interviewees with personal volunteering experience enjoyed it, and would suggest it to others looking to develop skills. In relation to the labour market, volunteering was seen as being relevant where a job applicant made it relevant by including it on an application or CV and/or discussing it at interview. The exception to this was third sector employers, who actively sought volunteering experience in their recruitment process. Therefore, a key finding of the research is that employers will find volunteering relevant to employability where the individual applicant makes it prominent on their application for employment.

This is important in the light of the work of Hillage and Pollard (1998), and subsequent developments in measuring employability (Deloitte and Touche, 2001; McQuaid and Lindsay, 2005). As the diagram below (Deloitte and Touche, 2001: 73) demonstrates, employability is about more than the individual, the wider context is important:

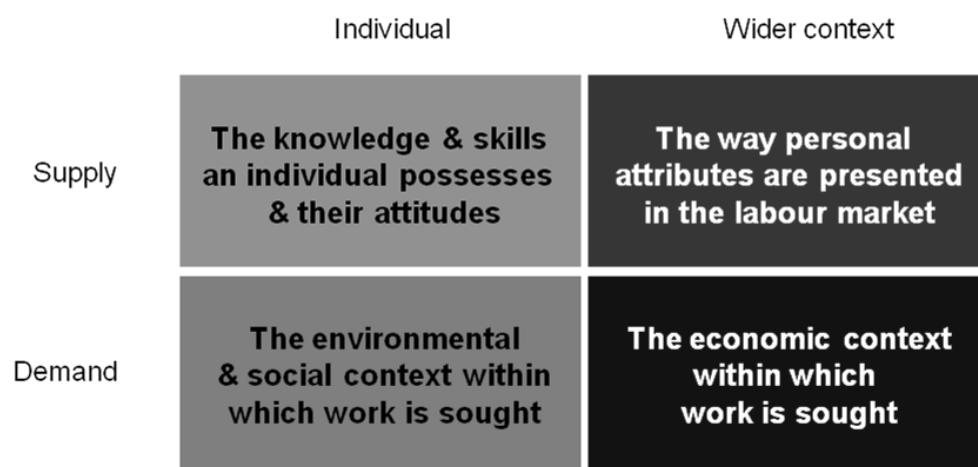


Figure 40: The dimensions of employability

This research has found that the way personal attributes are presented in the labour market is important to employers making recruitment decisions: if volunteering experience is articulated in way that helps employers see its relevance, then it will be taken into account. It is notable from the case studies, however, that the volunteer-involvers do not all offer career advice, and this raises a question over the advice that volunteers might get on using volunteering on their CV, and suggests a possible gap in provision of specialist advice on describing volunteering experience. This is an important finding for individuals using volunteer experience on their CV, and for those advising volunteers on job applications.

Related to this, employers differentiate between labour market groups, and view volunteering as being more relevant for students and graduates than for the disabled, for example. Volunteering is viewed by employers as a way to demonstrate willingness to work during periods of unemployment, and as a way to gain additional experiences to enhance experiences from education and paid work. As such, it is seen as more important for students, graduates and the unemployed. This suggests that the impact of volunteering for employability will vary for different demographic groups, an issue raised by Ellis Paine and colleagues (2013). Although the case studies are working primarily with the unemployed, as mentioned earlier, they are also working with other labour market groups, and so this finding is important for the development of suitable programmes of support for volunteers.

In terms of how volunteering is treated within the recruitment process, it is clear that it is seen as a way of deciding between similarly qualified candidates. For example, employer KK made clear that a recent recruit had been selected over an equally qualified recruit, on the basis that they had undertaken volunteering to enhance their educational qualifications. Similarly, employers were keen to see volunteering experience that was relevant to their business, as this demonstrates that candidates have a specific interest in working in their field. This suggests that volunteering will enhance employability where it is relevant to the job applied for, or where the candidate can convince the employer of the transferability of skills from the volunteering context, to the work context. In the light that many individuals have difficulty in recognising and articulating their skills, this finding is important for volunteer-involvers helping individuals into work.

Employers with personal volunteering experience were more likely to be negative about the employability outcomes of particular types of volunteering, such as charity shops and committee work. This is important in the light that the case organisations view charity shop volunteering as an easy start for new volunteers. Although they advise individuals to undertake more than one type of volunteering, it appears that there is some bias in the labour market towards particular activities. As such, it is important that individual volunteers are supported to identify skills gained through while volunteering in order that they can demonstrate them in the labour market, and that they are able to access more than one opportunity in order to avoid labour market bias towards particular activity.

A small number of employers interviewed involve volunteers in their own work (voluntary and public sector), and a small number of others have a staff volunteering policy (public and private sector). Those voluntary sector employers are more likely to actively request information on volunteering experience in the application process. The public sector employers are no more likely to seek volunteering experience. For those organisations with a volunteering policy, this is seen to contribute to their Corporate Social Responsibility agenda, particularly in forging links with local communities. The policies provided were recently developed, so no data was available on uptake. There is no sense from employers that staff volunteering would impact on an individual's chances for career development. It appears therefore, that there is no relationship between an organisations promotion of staff volunteering, and their likelihood to recruit candidates with volunteering experience. However, voluntary sector organisations are more positive towards volunteering experience, suggesting that those seeking work after volunteering, may have more success in the voluntary sector than either the public or private sectors.

8.5 Theoretical contribution

In the conceptual chapter, social capital theory (Bourdieu, 1986) and human capital theory (Becker, 1975) were introduced as the theoretical basis of the research. Both theories have been linked with volunteering in literature (Wilson and Musick, 1997; Putnam, 2000), as they apply to both the networking potential of voluntary activity, as well as to the skills development potential. In relation to employability, both types of capital have been considered important in the search for work (McQuaid and Lindsay, 2005; Lindsay, 2009), particularly in relation to the long-term unemployed (McQuaid and Lindsay, 2005). In the same research, McQuaid and Lindsay (2005) created a framework for analysing employability, taking as three strands: 'individual factors', 'personal circumstances' and 'external factors', as seen below:

INDIVIDUAL FACTORS	PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCES	EXTERNAL FACTORS
<p>Employability skills and attributes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essential attributes • Basic transferable skills • Key transferable skills • Personal competencies • High-level transferable skills • Qualifications • Work-knowledge base • Labour market attachment 	<p>Household circumstances</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct caring responsibilities • Other family and caring responsibilities • Other household circumstances 	<p>Demand factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labour market factors • Macro-economic factors • Vacancy characteristics • Recruitment factors
<p>Job search and adaptability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job search and presentation skills • Adaptability and mobility 	<p>Health and well-being</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health • Disability 	<p>Enabling Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment policy factors • Other enabling policy factors
	<p>Access to resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to transport • Access to financial capital • Access to social capital 	

Figure 41: The three strands of employability

As identified in the conceptual chapter, volunteering has the potential to relate to each of the three strands in the framework, with ‘individual factors’ focusing primarily on building human capital, ‘personal circumstances’ focusing on building social capital, and ‘external factors’ focusing on contribution to public policy and employer attitudes.

Relating to ‘individual factors’, as anticipated, volunteering undertaken through employability programmes contributes to both employability skills, and job search. Organisations map individuals to volunteering activity that helps them develop identified skills to meet gaps: for some these are basic skills, for others, high-level skills. They also offer opportunities for individuals to gain qualifications that have currency in the labour market. In each of the case examples, organisations support job search, either through support provided in-house, or by a network of referrals that helps individuals access the support they need locally.

The relationship between volunteering and ‘personal circumstances’ is more complex, as volunteering is unlikely to impact on individual household circumstances. Nevertheless, there is evidence from most case studies, that individual household circumstances impact upon the ability and likelihood of individuals to volunteer. Volunteering is viewed by some cases as offering way to support mental health, from confidence through to more serious health issues. Volunteering contributes to individual employability primarily through ‘access to resources’, specifically to social capital, which allows volunteers to make contacts that lead to paid employment. Although this is mostly reported within the voluntary sector, it is nevertheless a contribution of volunteering to individual employability.

Under the ‘external factors’ strand, volunteering could be identified as an enabling policy factor, as policy allows for individuals to volunteer in order to prepare them for paid work. In addition, there is evidence of some impact on demand factors, as the volunteering and employability agenda creates jobs, albeit on a small scale. Considering ‘demand factors’, it is clear from the sample of Scottish employers that volunteering can have a role in staff recruitment if individuals applying for work make it relevant. Voluntary sector employers are likely to specifically seek volunteering experience from potential recruits, and so for those applying for work in the other sectors, they have to be supported to strengthen their case that volunteering has contributed to their human and social capital.

8.6 Themes arising from the research

Volunteer-involving organisations are acting as labour market-intermediaries, providing specialist volunteering support within wider frameworks of employability provision. Data from the case studies suggests that this involvement is supported by Government funding at a local, Scottish, United Kingdom and European level. Despite Government having a primary focus on unemployment, there is evidence that volunteer-involvers are supporting other labour market groups into volunteering as a result of legislative changes to welfare benefits. Organisations are therefore working to meet a wide range of needs, and it is clear that some of these needs cannot be met within tight timescales. Flexibility, therefore has been a key element of the successes within the case studies, and if Government wishes to see success, it may have to recognise the need for longer timescales and further investment in tackling the multiple issues of job seekers. The referral system offers individuals a range of support, but at the same time causes difficulty in capturing useful data on multiple interventions.

For volunteer-involving organisations, this agenda has helped their financial sustainability, and in a small scale, helped sustain jobs and create new volunteering opportunities. It has also had knock-on effects on volunteers' managers ability to offer more and better volunteering opportunities which enhance employability, while meeting the needs of the clients, and planning for sustainability. This raises questions of whether this agenda is one that is useful to volunteer-involving organisations in the longer term, and whether it might be tackled differently. Further to this, volunteering and employability programmes are increasing the number of volunteers, including increasing the number from demographic groups who typically do not volunteer. This is good, but raises questions over volunteering becoming associated with welfare-to-work, and being seen as something you do when out of work, which would have a knock-on effect on sustainability of volunteer-involving organisations.

Employers take a positive view of volunteering and of the characteristics of volunteers. However, they place the onus for bringing volunteering into the recruitment process on the individual volunteer. The case examples show that career planning forms part of programmes, either within the volunteer-involving organisation, or outwith, and this finding is important for any organisation advising people on job applications. The exception is voluntary organisations, who actively seek volunteering in new recruits, adding weight to the argument that it is easier for volunteers to gain employment in the

voluntary sector. Further to this is the issue of how volunteering is viewed, with particular types of volunteering being viewed as less able to provide skills. It is important that volunteers and volunteer-involvers are clear about the skills gained and the level of responsibility undertaken by volunteers in order that they can articulate this in the labour market.

8.7 Reflections on the Research Process

The case study method employed with volunteer-involving organisations has allowed for detailed information to be collected on their roles and experiences as labour market intermediaries. Although the interviews were conducted with multiple participants within each case, there was little divergence of experience. The depth of information collected was suitable to answer the research questions, and in fact the information provided went beyond the questions asked, into issues that had been raised in previous research such as unsuitable referrals from statutory services (Baird, 2003a) and difficulties in data collection when working within a partnership approach (McGregor et al., 2002).

Visits to research case studies provided opportunities for the researcher to see facilities, meet clients, see volunteering outputs and overall gain a better understanding of the physical environments involved. Future research would benefit from a degree of observation as it provides the researcher with data on the practical experiences of volunteers. Beyond this, it might be useful for future researchers in this area to experience volunteering being undertaken, or to undertake an ethnographic approach to researching the interaction between the individual volunteers and the organisations they are referred to. However, negotiation of access may prove difficult, and researcher availability may be problematic.

The interview method used with employers was enhanced by the addition of a survey which was used to both recruit interview participants, and to ask attitudinal questions that had been removed from the interview schedule at the pilot stage. This survey data provided an additional insight into employers attitudes, which supported and supplemented the data collected from interviews. The interviews themselves were conducted with one representative of each organisation, with supplementary information collected in the form of policies and other relevant documents. Although this method allowed an insight into views and experiences, it could have been usefully supplemented with some observation, for example of the recruitment process. This would have allowed

a further level of analysis, but might be more difficult to negotiate as it would require the permission of both the organisation and job candidates.

8.8 Suggestions for Future Research

This research has taken a view of volunteering and employability beyond that of the individual. While research from the viewpoint of the individual is largely positive about volunteering (Cordon and Sainsbury, 2005; Schugurensky et al., 2005), this research has joined others (Lee, 2010a; Ellis Paine et al., 2013) in raising questions regarding the experiences of volunteer-involvers, as well as some insight into how volunteering is treated in the demand side of the labour market.

While the case study organisations have entered into supporting volunteering as a route towards enhanced employability, it is clear that this is not without issues (Ockenden and Hill, 2009). For example, the impact of the agenda on volunteer-involvers in relation to high volunteer turnover, volunteer expectation, and demand. Further investigation of the prevalence of these issues might help with the creation of methods of minimising negative effects on individual organisations. In addition, despite the financial benefits to organisations who receive support to offer volunteering and employability programmes, where they refer clients on to other organisations, they are benefitting from the work of others. A better understanding of the effect of this on smaller organisations would be helpful.

At the level of the individual, the majority of research on volunteering and employability has focused on moving into work (Gay, 1998; Cordon and Sainsbury, 2005; Lee, 2010a). The case study organisations were not offering support to those already in work, and so the role of volunteering for those in work and hoping to progress through their careers is a remaining gap in knowledge. While this might be harder to identify and research, there would be benefit in understanding the role of volunteering for those in work, and how volunteering and work come together to support individual career development. This would also cast further light on the subject at hand.

The views of employers towards volunteering have been captured in a small scale, improving understanding of one element of the demand side of the employability spectrum. However, further work is needed in this arena to understand the junctures

between volunteering and other career improvement activities. For example, the role of internships and volunteering, as research suggests that for students, internships are seen as a better preparation for paid work (Reilly and Caddell, 2014).

From a policy viewpoint, this thesis adds to the voices that have urged caution in promoting volunteering as a definite route to employment (Lee, 2010a; Ellis Paine et al., 2013; Kamerade, 2013). It is clear that volunteering can have positive implications for individuals, but also stops short of helping individuals move into work in all circumstances. Further research to inform Government policy would be useful, although this needs to be based on robust data on the impact of volunteering for individual employability: an issue which the case study organisations and others need to tackle, as there is little evidence to support their impact.

From a practice viewpoint, there is evidence that volunteering resonates with third sector employers, but less so with others. This suggests that the third sector in Scotland is recruiting more volunteering and employability clients than other sectors. The third sector in Scotland is also host to a number of programmes of support for young people who are seeking employment experience, for example Third Sector Internships Scotland (Third Sector Internships Scotland, n.d.), who offer internships in the third sector to students at Scottish Universities, and Community Jobs Scotland (Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations, 2013), who offer work placements for young people within third sector organisations. Further research on the capacity of the third sector to continue to supply opportunities for a mix of programmes, and the impact on the makeup of the sector workforce would be a useful addition to existing knowledge.

Finally, this research has added to knowledge on how volunteering is viewed by a small number of employers in Scotland. There is still a need for further evidence on the impact of volunteering on employability on a larger scale, in order that it can inform understanding of how volunteering can contribute to individual development and employability.

Appendix A – Case Study Interview Topic Guide

Employability programmes

How do you define employability?

What are the timescales of an employability programme?

When would it be considered a success?

How are programmes evaluated? Is self-reporting by participants taken into account?

Do you take into account the wider social good from volunteering?

Do participants continue volunteering activity once they move into paid work?

What is different from what you do with volunteers generally?

How does employability fit with your organisational aims?

Is displacement an issue?

Who funds the programmes? What role do they have in shaping them?

Are they shaped by supply or demand, or both?

What role (if any) does government play in shaping your employability work?

The Labour Market

What is the local labour market like for those who come through your programmes?

Is there a range of organisations taking on, or is it the ‘usual suspects’?

What local circumstances are there?

How do you see your role in the labour market?

Do you have a role in job creation?

Is there conflict between your role as an employability provider and that of an employer/service provider?

Employability programme participants

Are programmes inclusive of all?

If not, how does the focus vary? Demographics?

Is employability only in relation to the unemployed?

What provision is made for those in work who want to enhance their employability?

Are there differences in participants? Career builders’ and Job hopefuls?

Do they represent those traditionally excluded from volunteering/the paid labour market?

The volunteering activity

What activities are volunteers undertaking for employability?

Does this differ from the remainder of your volunteers? In what ways?
Is volunteering open to everyone? Are existing skills and qualifications important?
What ongoing support is provided to volunteers?
What tasks are volunteers undertaking?
Do they allow for the development of new skills, enhancement of existing ones?
What training is made available? Is this skill based or generic?
Do the tasks given relate to known gaps in the local labour market?
Does the training given reflect local labour market need?

Employability support

What support is given to volunteers in relation to job search activity?
Are their skills identified and matched to the paid labour market?
Do they receive career planning support?
What support is given in relation to self-presentation?
Is their participation certified? Can they expect a reference?
Are volunteers encouraged to continue once they are in the paid labour market?
In your experience, do they tend to do so?

Appendix B - Employers Interview Topic Guide

Volunteering

In your own words, how would you describe volunteering?

Aside from payment, how would you say that volunteering differed from paid work?

What characteristics and skills would you expect a volunteer to have?

Can you tell me about your own experience of volunteering?

On a personal level, do you encourage others to volunteer, e.g. friends, family members?

Recruitment behaviour

Does volunteering appear in your recruitment policies?

Does it feature in your recruitment practices?

How is volunteering treated in the recruitment process?

(Application, interview, selection?)

How does it sit alongside qualifications and experience?

Do you value volunteering in potential recruits?

What kinds of volunteering do you think are most valuable to you as an employer? (Non-profit, civil society, serious leisure?)

Are there any types of volunteering that you would consider irrelevant to your business?

Do you focus on specific skills or experiences?

Would you consider training received as a volunteer to be relevant to paid work in your company?

What about 'compulsory' types of volunteering, e.g. through a work programme or education course? Would this be different from community based volunteering?

Does accredited volunteering have better standing? Why? What type of accreditation would most attract you e.g. hours based, outcome based, reflection based?

What role does networking play in recruitment? Do you recruit through word of mouth?

Do you have any examples of staff whose volunteering experience gave them an advantage in your recruitment process?

Retention and promotion

Do you have a staff volunteering policy?

How is volunteering treated in practice within the organisation?

Do you encourage staff to volunteer in their own time, or as part of an ESV programme?

Can you tell me more about this?

Does volunteering play a role in staff promotion?

Do you have an IiV or IiVe accreditation?

Additional questions for volunteer involving employers

Do you recruit your own volunteers into paid positions? Tell me a bit more about this.

Do you recruit volunteers from sister organisations into paid positions? How does that work?

Do you encourage staff to volunteer with you?

Appendix C – Employers Survey

Volunteering is the giving of time and energy through a third party, which can bring measurable benefits to the volunteer, individual beneficiaries, groups and organisations, communities, the environment and society at large. It is a choice undertaken of one's own free will, and is not motivated primarily for financial gain or for a wage or salary

Organisation sector (*circle*) public private voluntary
 Number of staff (*circle*) small (<50) medium (50-249) large (>250)
 Job role (*write in*)

Questions about your organisational practices:

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Volunteering is valued equally to paid work in our recruitment process					
We encourage job applicants to include volunteering experience in their application to us					
We encourage job applicants to discuss volunteering experience at interview					
Volunteering experience is relevant to us when we consider job applications					
<i>(a) when the experience matches our business</i>					

<i>(b) when the experience is unrelated to our business</i>					
We encourage employees to volunteer during paid work time					
We encourages employees to volunteer in their own time					
We involve volunteers in our work					

Questions about your personal attitudes:

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Aside from pay, there is no difference between volunteering and paid work					
The <i>skills</i> gained through volunteering are valuable in the workplace					
The <i>experience</i> gained through volunteering is valuable in the workplace					
Volunteering can have a positive impact on an individual's career <i>prospects</i>					
Volunteering can have a positive effect on an individual's career <i>progression</i>					
Job applicants with volunteering experience are no different to those without volunteering experience					
Volunteering experience is more valuable if it is related to a qualification or certification					

<p>The following groups would benefit from volunteer experience:</p> <p><i>a) school leavers</i></p> <p><i>b) graduates</i></p> <p><i>c) short-term unemployed</i></p> <p><i>d) long-term unemployed</i></p> <p><i>e) people with disabilities</i></p> <p><i>f) labour market returners</i></p> <p><i>g) those in insecure employment</i></p> <p><i>h) the under-employed</i></p>					
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Have you volunteered in the past? Yes No

Do you currently volunteer? Yes No

What is your gender? Male Female

What age group do you fit? 16-24 25-34 35-44 45-54 55-64 65+

As part of this research project, I am seeking employers to take part in in-depth interviews about volunteering and employability in relation to their practice. If you would be willing to take part in this, please leave your name and email address below.

Appendix D – Participant Information

Volunteering and Employability: PhD Research

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done, and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

What is the purpose of the study?

The study forms part of a three-year PhD research project being carried out at Heriot-Watt University. The research aims are two-fold. Firstly, to better understand the role of volunteer-involving organisations in preparing individuals for paid work through volunteering, and secondly, to better understand the attitudes of employers towards volunteering.

Why have I been chosen?

Your organisation has been identified as one which may be able to provide useful insight into one of the areas being considered by the research.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part, you are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

What will happen if I take part?

You will be asked to take part in an interview (either in person, or by telephone to suit your circumstances) which will take no longer than 1 hour (and possibly less). You may be asked to complete a pre-interview questionnaire prior to this, in your own time, which will take no longer than 10 minutes.

With your permission, the interview will be recorded on an electronic recording device. The information will then be transcribed, and sent to you for approval. If you do not wish the interview to be recorded, hand-written notes will be taken during the interview,

transcribed thereafter, and sent to you for approval. Approval of the interview material provides the researcher with permission to use the data collected in outputs from the PhD research.

Will my participation in this study be kept confidential?

The details of research participants and the organisations they represent will remain anonymous in research outputs. All information which is collected during the course of the research will be stored in a locked filing cabinet, and retained only until the research has been written up and the thesis has passed the viva examination. Access will be restricted to the PhD student and supervisory team.

What will happen with the results of the research study?

The information gathered from interviews will be written up in the final thesis, and in other research outputs such as journal articles. The published thesis will be available through both the University and British Libraries, and participants will be alerted when this happens.

All participants, and the organisations they represent, will be anonymous in any written outputs from the research and will have the opportunity to approve material prior to its use in the research outputs.

Who is organising and funding the research?

Heriot-Watt University School of Management and Languages provides supervision for the research project and a James Watt Scholarship provides funding for the research.

Contact for further information:

If you want to find out more about this research, please contact Christine in the first instance:

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Christine Reilly

PhD Student

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PhD Primary Supervisor

Professor Mike Danson

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Thank you for deciding to take part in this study.

Please keep this information sheet for your own reference.

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Appendix E – Excerpts from Staff Volunteering Policies

Organisation BB

The Principle of the Policy is as follows:

“We recognise that [organisation BB] has an impact on the communities in which we operate. Staff volunteering reflects [organisation BB’s] core values as an organisation. Volunteering by staff to benefit the [local] communities demonstrates their passion, inspiration and ambition for our neighbourhoods and customers”

The policy notes that the organisation, the individual member of staff, and the recipient organisation all benefit from staff volunteering. They specify that:

“Employees who take part in volunteering can expect the following benefits:

- Develop new and existing skills, and experience new situations and challenges
- Make a difference to a cause they really care about
- Meet and work with people from different backgrounds
- Gain a broader understanding of, and establish positive relationships with our customers and neighbourhoods”.

While the benefits to the organisation are described as follows:

- “Better able to meet wider aims and objectives
- Employees with enhanced skills, more commitment and motivation
- Employees with increased morale, fostering improved teamwork
- Improved business performance resulting from volunteers accessing a variety of networks and unique situations which will allow them to inform and aid future business decisions
- Enhanced public image as more people see us as socially responsible
- Stronger links with the local community and local organisations”.

The policy “covers [organisation BB] staff volunteering activities which are supported by the organisation and which take place mainly within working hours”. The support of volunteering “may include sourcing volunteering opportunities, giving staff time away

from their work to volunteer for specific activities or by allowing the use of premises and equipment”.

The policy notes that existing relationships with local organisations will be used to source volunteering opportunities to keep the focus local, with the exception of national events such as Sports Relief, and that employees can make use of existing opportunities such as half-day training or team away days to organise volunteering.

In relation to the role of managers, the policy states:

“We will ensure that managers are effective in supporting the development of the staff volunteering programme and they understand the objectives, benefits and learning outcomes of volunteering. We will ensure that managers are adequately briefed in the process for expressing an interest in undertaking volunteering”.

Organisation EE

The policy is introduced as follows:

“As part of our commitment to our basis of good business principles and building a great place to work, the company recognises the value of colleagues giving something back to their local communities. We are committed to providing opportunities for colleagues to volunteer and to develop skills outside of their working environment. This policy describes the right to request time off work for volunteering and how a request may be made”

The policy applies to all staff of the company who are not agency workers or self-employed. Staff must have worked for the company for over twelve months and must have good attendance and performance at work. “If you are eligible, you may ask for up to two working days off per year (pro-rata) between 1 January – 31 December each year to volunteer to support your local community”. A form is provided for staff to use to apply for time off and “must contain information about:

- The charity/community group/other organisation you will be supporting
- What specific activity you will be doing
- Why you are keen to support the organisation

- Where and when the activity is taking place
- How long the activity is for”

The line manager of the staff member has 14 days to respond to the request.

Going forward, the policy notes that the company will be identifying projects that staff can get involved in, and also linking from the staff intranet to “general information on volunteering activities and organisations which are keen to work with volunteers”.

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